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THE

ANCIENT CHURCH,

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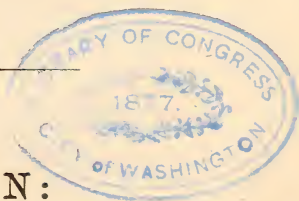
FROM THE

CAPTIVITY TO THE COMING OF CHRIST.

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THE ANCIENT CHURCH.

INTRODUCTION.

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY, in the larger sense, is a history of the whole church of God, under every dispensation, from the beginning to the present time. God began to have a *real* church on the earth as soon as there were any truly pious persons ; and he began to have a *visible* church, as soon as these pious persons became in any way embodied, so as to render their peculiar covenant relation to himself visible.

It cannot be doubted that there was a church, and a visible church, before the flood. There were then “the sons of God,” in distinction from “the daughters of men.” There

were those who “called on the name of the Lord,” and walked righteously with him, in distinction from those who forgot and forsook him. (Gen. 4 : 26 ; 6 : 2.)

The earliest form of church government, like that of civil government, was patriarchal. The head of a family, or the ancestors of a tribe, sustained to his descendants and dependents the relation both of ruler and priest. Those under him were not only his subjects, but in a sense his church. We have examples of this form of government in the case of Noah, of Melchizedek, of Job, of Lot, and of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The church in the first ages had at least two outward ordinances ; *the weekly Sabbath*, and *bloody sacrifices*. Perhaps they had others of which we have no knowledge. They had also direct revelations from God,—truths, warnings, promises, threats, with other intimations of the Divine will.

The ritual of the church underwent a change, in the time of Abraham. The true religion was now beginning to be corrupted,

and other gods were worshiped, at least in some places. (See Josh. 24 : 14, 15.) Foreseeing the general defection about to ensue, God summoned Abraham from the land of his nativity, brought him into Canaan, established his covenant with him, and gave him a new and very significant outward rite ; I mean that of *circumcision*. The covenant now given to Abraham was properly a *church covenant*, and circumcision was an ordinance of the church. It is spoken of in the Scriptures as “the token of God’s covenant,” and as “a seal of the righteousness of faith.” (Gen. 17 : 11. Rom. 4 : 11.) By the transaction here referred to, the posterity of Abraham,—or those of them who adhered to the covenant,—were constituted a *visible church*, and the *only* visible church which for a long time, existed in the earth. Accordingly, from this time God begins to speak of himself as *the God of Abraham* and *of Israel*, and of the children of Israel as in a peculiar, covenant sense, *his people*. (See Ex. 3 : 6, 7.)

The ritual of the church underwent another

change, in the time of Moses. He was commissioned to institute many new observances, some of them political, but more of them symbolical or typical. The object of these institutions was not, as some have supposed, to found a *new* Israelitish church,—to separate a people unto the Lord, to whom he had held before no covenant relation. It was rather, as Moses himself informs us, “to *establish* the children of Israel to be his people, as he had sworn unto their fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” (Deut. 29 : 13.) These institutions were adapted and designed to teach many important truths, to preserve the Israelites a separate and holy people, and to maintain among them the true religion, until the great “Light of the world” should come.

Not only the ritual of the church, but its *government*, also, underwent a change, at the time of Moses. Before, it was patriarchal; now it became, to some extent, *national*. The Israelites ceased to be a mere tribe or clan, and became a nation. They grew to be a great and powerful nation, of which God

claimed to be the proper Sovereign, and in which church and state were in so many ways united as to be inseparable.

This church of Israel is that which existed all along under the former dispensation. It was the Zion of the Old Testament, often chastised for its corruptions, but never utterly forsaken ; to which the promises were made, and into which the Gentiles were, in after times, gathered.

The history of the church, and its *entire* history, during the first three thousand years of its existence, is found in the Old Testament. And it is no slight honor put upon church history, and no slight recommendation of this branch of study, that it constitutes so large a portion of the Bible. The statements of Moses, and Joshua, and Samuel, and their successors are variously *confirmed* from other sources ; but very little, of historic value, can now be added to what they have themselves told us.

It is no part of my present plan to dwell upon the history of the Old Testament, or to

detail anew the events there recorded. These are familiar to every reader of the Bible. My design rather is, to take up the history of the church, very nearly where the writers of the Old Testament leave it, and follow it down till the coming of Christ; or in other words, to connect the history of the Old and New Testaments, so as to make of both one continuous whole:

This is not, indeed, an altogether untrodden field. Others have gone over the ground before me. But their works are either too meagre to satisfy a rational inquirer, or too voluminous to admit of extensive circulation. Besides, some of these writers (Dean Prideaux, for example) discuss a variety of questions which do not properly belong to the subject, and are not of interest to the common reader.

The history which I propose to give of that interesting period,—from the captivity to the birth of Christ, must necessarily be brief; and yet I design it to be sufficiently full to enable the reader to form a judgment of the

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principal characters introduced, and events recorded, and to trace the dealings of God with his covenant people, from the days of the prophets to those of the Messiah.

The original sources of information (aside from the Bible) with regard to the period before us, are the Apocryphal books of the Old Testament, Philo Judæus, Josephus, and the historical records of those kings and nations—the Assyrians and Persians, the Syrians and Egyptians, the Greeks and Romans—which were brought more or less into contact with the Jews. The *compilations* from these sources, in which I have been most interested, and to which I am most indebted, are Prideaux' *Connexion*, and Jahn's *History of the Hebrew Commonwealth*.

As the first oppressors of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel were the Assyrians and Babylonians, it may be well to preface our narrative with a brief sketch—the briefest possible—of the history of these two great nations.

Babylon was founded by Nimrod, a son of

Ham ; and Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, by Ashur, a son of Shem, about one hundred and ten years after the flood. (See Gen. 10 : 10, 11.) Assyria derived its name from Ashur, and Nineveh from his son and successor Ninus. Babylon was situated on the Euphrates ; and Nineveh on the Tigris, some four degrees North of Babylon. Ninus, the first king of Nineveh, after its founder, was an aspiring, ambitious man. He began a war of conquest, and was "the first," says Shuckford, "to break the peace of the world." He conquered the Babylonians, and annexed their city and territory to his empire. He was succeeded by his more ambitious wife, Semiramis, who removed the seat of empire from Nineveh to Babylon, and did much to adorn and strengthen this latter city. She was succeeded by her son, Ninyas, who seems to have been a quiet, luxurious prince, who labored to improve his dominion rather than enlarge it, and who cultivated the arts of peace.

After the death of Ninyas, the Assyrians are scarcely mentioned in history, for a long

period. We hear almost nothing, either of them or their rulers, for the next twelve hundred years. The probability is, that the empire continued, though in what condition, and with what fortunes, we do not know. It would seem that it could not have been very extensive, or we should have heard more of it in the earlier portions of the Old Testament.\*

In the days of the kings of Judah and

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\* Among the kings who invaded Sodom, and whom Abraham conquered, were "Amraphal, king of Shinar," the very country in which Babylon was situated, and "Chederlaomer, king of Elam," which lay beyond the Tigris, (Gen. 14: 1.) Perhaps one of these may have been, under another name, the king of Assyria.

In the time of David, Assur, or Assyria, is spoken of as among those that were confederate against Israel; probably in the war with Haderezer, king of Zobah, when David extended his conquests to the Euphrates. (Compare Ps. 83: 8, with 1 Chron. 18: 3.) This would imply that the kingdom of Assyria was then in existence, though not of great extent or power.

It is stated that Sesostris, one of the Egyptian kings, (who may have been cotemporary with Moses) carried his conquests even to India. If so, he must have encountered the king of Assyria.—It is earnestly hoped that the excavations now in progress at Nineveh may throw light on the history of this ancient people.



Israel (but precisely when is not known) the prophet Jonah was sent of God to denounce destruction upon Nineveh.\* Nineveh was at this time “an exceeding great city, of three days journey;”—an indication that it had long been a prosperous city. Who that king of Nineveh was, who repented at the preaching of Jonah, and on whose account the city was spared, we are not informed.

At a later period, during the reign of Menahem, king of Israel, “Pul, the king of Assyria came into the land; and Menahem gave him a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him, to confirm the Kingdom in his hand. And Menahem exacted the money of Israel to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land.” (2 Kings 15: 19, 20.) This is the first king of Assyria, whose name occurs in the Old Testament. It is generally believed that Pul, of the

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\* We only know that it was previous to the time of Jeroboam, son of Joash, king of Israel. See 2 Kings 14: 25.

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Scriptures, is the same as Sardanapalus of secular history.

The Assyrian empire was at this time one ; but it was soon divided. Arbaces, governor of Media, and Belesis, governor of Babylon, conspired against Sardanapalus, slew him, and divided his kingdom between themselves ; the former reigning at Nineveh, and the latter at Babylon. Arbaces was the Tiglath-pileser of the Scriptures ; the same who fought against Pekah, king of Israel, and carried many of the Israelites into captivity. (2 Kings 15 : 29.) Belesis was the same as Nabonassar, with whose reign commences the celebrated astronomical era, called the era of Nabonassar. He is called Baladan in the Scriptures. (Is. 39 : 1.)

Shalmaneser succeeded his father, Tiglath-pileser, and completed the conquest of the ten tribes of Israel. This event took place in the year before Christ 720. Among those who were carried captive at this time, was Tobit, with his wife Anna, and his son Tobias, as

related in one of the Apocryphal books of the Old Testament. (See Tobit, Chap. 1.)

The same year in which Samaria was taken by Shalmaneser, Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan (or Belesis) commenced his reign at Babylon. This is that king of Babylon who sent messengers and a present to king Hezekiah, on hearing of his recovery from sickness. (Is. 39 : 1.)

Shalmaneser was succeeded on the throne of Assyria by his son, Sennacherib. He repeatedly invaded Judea, and proudly threatened the destruction of Jerusalem ; but in answer to the prayers of Isaiah and Hezekiah, and in rebuke of his own blasphemy, his army was terribly destroyed. The angel of the Lord went forth into the camp of the Assyrians, and smote, in a single night, 185,000 men. " So Sennacherib departed, and returned to Nineveh. And it came to pass as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch, his god, that two of his sons smote him with the sword ; and they escaped into



the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead." (Is. 37: 37, 38.)

Esarhaddon came to the throne of his father, in the twenty-second year of king Hezekiah, and reigned, in great prosperity and glory, thirty-nine years. In the twenty-sixth year of his reign he vanquished the monarch of Babylon, and united that kingdom to his own. Soon after this, he invaded Palestine, and carried into captivity the poor remains of the ten tribes of Israel. He supplied their places with colonists from Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, Sepharvaim, and from other parts of his dominions. (See 2 Kings 17: 24. Ezra 4: 2—10.) At the same time, he sent an army into Judea, and captured Manasseh, one of the vilest and wickedest of the kings of Jerusalem. He took Manasseh with him to Babylon; where his prison, his chains, and his deep afflictions, brought him to repentance. Upon Manasseh's humbling himself, and confessing his wrong, Esarhaddon restored him to his kingdom, where

he reigned in peace and prosperity till his death. (2 Chron. 33 : 11—16.)

The successors of Esarhaddon were Sundocheus his son, and Chynilidanus his grandson ; both imbecile, luxurious, inglorious princes, who accomplished nothing worthy of mention in history. Against the latter, Nabopolassar, one of his generals, conspired ; took from him his kingdom ; and reigned at Babylon twenty-one years. Nabopolassar in connection with the Medes, put an end to the great city of Nineveh, when it had existed some sixteen hundred years. In this destruction were fulfilled the terrible predictions of the prophet Nahum against Nineveh ; and from this time, Babylon became the sole metropolis of the Assyrian empire. Nabopolassar was the father of the renowned Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed Jerusalem, led the Jews into captivity, and with whom the following history will commence.

One word, in this connection, with regard to the ten tribes of Israel. They were placed

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by the kings of Assyria, who carried them away, "in Halah, and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes." (2 Kings 17: 6.) This was a mountainous country, in the Northern part of ancient Media and Assyria, near the head waters of the Tigris. From this period (720 before Christ) we hear little of the ten tribes as a distinct people, in either sacred or profane history. The probability is that a part of them, in course of time, became incorporated with the Jews, and were known as such. Another part found their way back to their own land, and uniting with those of their brethren who still remained there, and with those foreigners whom the kings of Assyria had planted in their cities, they constituted that mixed community, which was known for ages, and is still known, as the Samaritans. Still another part, it may be feared, went into a final apostasy from the true religion, and were lost among the nations where they dwelt. Much inquiry has been made, and for a long time, after the lost ten

tribes of Israel ; but it is hardly likely that they are now in existence, as a distinct community, or that they will ever be found.

Our history, therefore, lies chiefly with that other portion of God's ancient covenant people, *the Jews*. Commencing with Nebuchadnezzar, who led them into captivity, we shall follow them along, as best we may, till we arrive at gospel times, and emerge into the light of the Messiah's kingdom.

## CHAPTER I.

*Nebuchadnezzar and his Successors. The  
Capture of Babylon by Cyrus.*

NEBUCHADNEZZAR was the son of Nabopolassar, and succeeded his father on the throne of Babylon, in the year 607 before Christ. He was allied by marriage to the king of the Medes, and was an instrument in the hand of God of chastising most of the guilty nations of central and western Asia. He first invaded Judea, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah. Jerusalem was conquered at this time, and Jehoiakim was taken prisoner; but upon his humbling himself to the king of Babylon, and consenting to become his vassal, his throne and kingdom were restored to him. It was at this time that the first captives were sent from Jerusalem to Babylon, among whom were Daniel and his three friends. This is



reckoned as the commencement of the seventy years captivity.

Only three years after this, Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, and entered into a confederacy with Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt. Whereupon the Babylonians and their allies again invaded Judea, took Jehoiakim prisoner, and slew him with the sword. His lifeless remains were cast out into the open field, having none to bury them; thus fulfilling one of the prophecies of Jeremiah: "Thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim, king of Judah,—His dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost; and I will punish him and his seed for their iniquity." Jer. 36 : 30. In the progress of this war, Jehoiachim, the son of Jehoiakim, who had been placed upon the throne, was taken prisoner, and carried captive to Babylon, together with a vast number of the princes and principal inhabitants of the land. Among the exiles of this second captivity was the prophet Ezekiel.

Jerusalem and the temple were still stand-

ing, and many of the poorer class of the people remained in the land. Over these Nebuchadnezzar placed Zedekiah, a brother of Jehoiakim, exacting from him, at the same time, a most solemn oath to be true and faithful to himself. This engagement Zedekiah observed for several years ; but in the eighth year of his reign he violated it, and entered into confederacy with the king of Egypt. This brought Nebuchadnezzar again to Jerusalem, with a great army, by whom the city was closely besieged, and after a time was taken and destroyed. The temple also was destroyed, and all its riches, and its holy vessels, together with a great multitude of people, were carried to Babylon. The second year after this, the Babylonians again swept over the land of Israel, and took away the poor remains of the scattered people ; the last company of exiles, amounting in all to "seven hundred forty and five persons." (Jer. 52 : 30). Thus was the land left desolate and waste, to enjoy her Sabbaths, accord-

ing to the denunciations of the prophets, until the time of the captivity should be fulfilled.

After the destruction of Jerusalem, and the conquest of Tyre and Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon, and applied himself to the strengthening and adorning of his capital. And this work he prosecuted with the utmost vigor, until he rendered Babylon, with its walls and towers, its gates and palaces, its temples and hanging gardens, the wonder of the world. When all this was accomplished, as he was walking one day in his palace, and looking out upon the splendors and luxuries of the place, he gave utterance to the pride of his heart in the following words : “ Is not this great Babylon that I have built, for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty ? ” Whereupon there befell him instantly, in rebuke of his pride, what the prophet Daniel had before declared : His reason and his kingdom were taken away ; he was driven from the society of men ; he had his dwelling with the brutes ; he did eat grass like an ox ; and his body was



wet with the dew of heaven; until his hair was grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. But at the end of seven years, his reason returned, and his former kingdom and majesty and glory were restored to him; and then it was that he made the following noble and humble confession: "I do bless the most High God, and praise and honor him who liveth forever and ever; whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and whose kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are as nothing before him; and he doeth according to his will, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? I do praise, and extol, and honor the king of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways are judgment, and those who walk in pride he is able to abase." (Dan. chap. 5).

From this period, Nebuchadnezzar became, as I would fondly hope, a truly pious man. He died, however, in a little more than a year,

having reigned, in great prosperity and glory, sole monarch of Babylon, for the long space of forty-three years.

Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by his son, Merodach; or as he is called in Scripture, Evil-Merodach. He showed favor to Jehoiachim, a former king of Judah, who had now been in confinement at Babylon thirty-seven years; as the sacred writer expresses it, the king of Babylon "spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the thrones of the kings that were with him at Babylon, and changed his prison garments, and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life." (2 Kings 25: 28). The occasion of Jehoiachim's being so kindly treated, according to an ancient Jewish tradition, was this: "Evil-Merodach, having had the government of the empire during his father's derangement, administered it so badly, that as soon as the old king came to himself, he shut him up in prison, and the place of his imprisonment being the same in which Jehoiachim had been so long confined, he there formed a particular acquaint-

ance with him, and friendship for him ; so that when the old king died, and Evil-Merodach came to the throne, he remembered Jehoiachim, and showed him favor.”

This Evil-Merodach proved himself to be a profligate and vicious prince. He reigned only two years at Babylon, when Neriglissar, his sister's husband, conspired against him, slew him, and reigned in his stead. Jehoiachim, it seems, died before him, or what is more likely, was slain with him. While Jehoiachim lived, he was regarded by the Jews at Babylon as *the Head or Prince of the captivity* ; an office which descended to Salathiel, his son, and which was long continued among the Jews.

Of Neriglissar, and his son and successor Laborosoarchod, no mention is made in the Scriptures. Their reigns were short and inglorious ; the latter having been slain by his subjects when he had been king only nine months. He was succeeded by Nabonadius, a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, who is called Belshazzar in the Scriptures.

The Babylonian empire was now verging to

its end, and God was preparing and raising up a terrible power for its overthrow. The kingdom of the Medes, lying North of Babylon, had long been one of great strength. It was now governed by Cyaxeres II., called in Scripture Darius the Mede. Another ancient kingdom, coming into notice in these days, was the Persian. This lay East of Babylon; was founded by Elam, a grandson of Noah; but never had distinguished itself among the nations, until the times of which we speak. Cyrus, who was now on the throne of Persia, was nephew to Cyaxeres (or Darius) the Mede. This brought the Medes and Persians into close alliance; and the principal thing attempted by this alliance was the overthrow of Babylon.

Cyrus, I hardly need say, was the greatest warrior of his age, and among the greatest of any age. He led the united forces of Media and Persia, and it was under his direction that Neriglissar, one of the kings of Babylon, had before been slain. He was the chief combatant, and ultimate conqueror of Nabonadius

(or Belshazzar), the last monarch of Babylon ; but this conquest was not effected without many battles, and long years of siege and war. Cyrus first thought it necessary to engage and subdue the *confederate nations* of Babylon. When this was accomplished, in the sixteenth year of the reign of Belshazzar, he laid siege to Babylon itself. This obviously was the only way in which the city could be taken ; and to capture it in this way, seemed almost a hopeless task. The walls were high and impregnable, and the number of men within to defend them was very great. They were furnished with provisions for twenty years, in addition to what might be raised from the gardens and tillage lands within the city. It is not strange, therefore, that the Babylonians, in their towers, scoffed at Cyrus, and derided his seemingly vain efforts to molest them.

When two full years had passed away, and nothing effectual had been accomplished, Cyrus hit upon a stratagem, through which success seemed possible, and by which he at length, got possession of the city. Having



learned that on a set day, a great national festival was to be celebrated in Babylon, when the king and his people would spend the whole night in reveling, drunkenness, and other disorders, he thought this a favorable time to surprise them; and for the effecting of his object, he adopted this device: He sent a party of his men up to the head of the canal, leading to a vast artificial lake, which had been excavated for the purpose of taking off the surplus waters of the river, with orders, at a time appointed, to remove the embankment between the river and canal, and draw off the whole current, or so much of it as possible into the lake. At the same time, he opened the head of the trenches which had been dug round the city, and let the residue of the water into them. Meanwhile, he had posted one part of his army at the place where the river ran into the city, and the other where it came out, with orders to enter the city, by the channel of the river, so soon as they should find it fordable. Before midnight, the river was sufficiently drained, and both parties en-

tered, through the opened passage, into the city.

But here they must have encountered an insuperable obstacle, had it not been for the drunkenness, and consequent carelessness of those within the walls. The brazen gates, which opened down to the river on either side, and which were always shut by night, happened now to be left open ; and through them both parties of the invaders ascended directly into the city. Thus remarkably was a prophecy of Isaiah, addressed to Cyrus by name, and uttered more than a hundred years before he was born, fulfilled at this time ; “ I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight. I will open the *two leaved gates*, and the gates shall not be shut.” (Is. 45 : 1, 2).

The soldiers having entered the city in the manner described, proceeded directly to the palace, where Belshazzar and his lords were drinking wine out of the golden and silver vessels which had been plundered from the temple at Jerusalem ; and where the mysteri-

ous hand-writing on the wall had just been interpreted by Daniel. Here they surprised and slew the guards; and when, upon the noise, the palace gates were opened, they rushed forward and planted themselves within. The king and his nobles encountered them, sword in hand, but they, and all who resisted, were almost immediately slain. After this, a proclamation was issued, promising life and protection to such as would lay down their arms, and threatening destruction to those who refused. Whereupon, all quietly yielded to the conquerors, and Cyrus, without farther resistance, became master of the city.

With the taking of Babylon, the Babylonish empire came to an end,—when it had existed (reckoning from the time of Nimrod), seventeen hundred years. The city, to be sure, was not now destroyed, and yet it never flourished more. Its decline was gradual, but constant, until it became a heap of ruins; and the place where it once stood is now scarcely to be distinguished.

The causes which hastened the destruction



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of this ancient city, aside from the ordinary ravages of time, were the following: 1. The Persians declined to adopt it, and make it the capital of their vast empire. Their kings preferred residing for the most part, at Shushan, on the river Ulai, some two hundred miles East of Babylon. It was here that Nehemiah attended upon king Artaxerxes, and that Esther resided with Ahasuerus. (Neh. 1: 1. Esther 1: 2). 2. The revolt of the Babylonians, during the reign of Darius Hystaspes, was to them and their city a most disastrous event. Babylon was captured a second time; its massy gates were demolished; its walls were, in part, broken down; and three thousand of its nobles were put to death. 3. When Xerxes returned from his disgraceful expedition into Greece, he passed through Babylon, threw down the tower of Belus, and plundered the temples of their treasures. 4. The means employed by Cyrus for the capture of Babylon, operated as one of the causes of its ruin. The river, diverted from its original bed, never but partially returned. It over-

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flowed the surrounding country, and turned it into a great morass; thus fulfilling one of the predictions of Isaiah: "It shall be a possession for the bittern, and for pools of water," (chap. 14: 23). This cause of destruction Alexander the great undertook to remove, by restoring the river to its ancient channel; but his untimely death put an end to his plans, and Babylon continued to suffer as before.

5. The building of Seleucia, or as it is sometimes called New Babylon, by one of the successors of Alexander, drew away from the old city a large portion of its inhabitants, and left its palaces and houses desolate.

6. Babylon was subject to the Parthians from the second century before Christ, down to the third century of the christian era; and from their alternate violence and neglect, it suffered greatly. All succeeding writers bear testimony to its desolate condition. In the fourth century after Christ, Jerome tells us that it was used by the Persian princes as a park or hunting ground, the wild beasts being enclosed within its walls. Babylon was visited by Benjamin

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of Tudela, a Jew, in the twelfth century after Christ, who saw nothing there but heaps of ruins ; and these were so full of serpents and venomous reptiles, that it was dangerous to inspect them. Thus terribly have the denunciations of the ancient prophets against Babylon been fulfilled : “ It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. Neither shall the Arabian pitch his tent there ; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there ; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures ; and owls shall dwell there ; and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in her pleasant palaces.” (Is. 13 : 20—22).

## CHAPTER II.

*The Medo-Persian Dominion, from Darius the Mede, to Xerxes the Great. The Return of the Jews, and the Rebuilding and Dedication of the Temple.*

IN my last Chapter, I spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem, by Nebuchadnezzar, and of the captivity of the Jews at Babylon ;—also of the conquest of Babylon by the combined forces of the Medes and Persians. When Babylon fell, the Jews, as a necessary consequence, changed masters. They came under the power of the Medes and Persians. I now propose to trace their history in connection with this new power.

Upon the death of Belshazzar, Darius the Mede is said in Scripture to have taken the kingdom. (Dan. 5 : 31.) And this is true : For although Cyrus had gained it by his valor, yet, so long as his uncle lived, (who was

also his father-in-law), he allowed him not only a joint title to it, but *the first place of honor in it*. This is that Darius, who set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes ; and over these, three presidents, of whom Daniel was first ; and who thought to set Daniel over the whole realm. This is that Darius, who, to gratify the envy of his princes, cast Daniel into the den of lions ; and who, upon his miraculous deliverance, published a decree, that “ men should everywhere tremble and fear before the God of Daniel ; for he is the living God, and steadfast forever, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.” (Dan. chap. 6.)

While these things were transacting at Babylon, Cyrus and his army were in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, subduing the restive nations, and setting in order the affairs of his vast kingdom. The symbolic ram was “ pushing westward, and northward, and southward, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand.” All was reduced under him as



far as to the Red Sea, and the very borders of Ethiopia.

Cyrus was absent on this expedition about two years, when he was summoned home by the death of Darius.

He now became sole monarch of the Medo-Persian empire, over which he reigned, in great prosperity, for the next seven years. This is called in Scripture, and also by Xenophon, the *first* year of the reign of Cyrus, though other historians commence his reign earlier. This is also the time, when the seventy years captivity of the Jews at Babylon was fulfilled, and when the first proclamation was issued for their return. (See Ezra 1 : 1.)

Long before Jerusalem was destroyed, God had said to his people, by the mouth of Jeremiah : “ Ye shall serve the king of Babylon *seventy years* ; ” and “ after seventy years shall be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word towards you, in causing you to return to this place.” (Jer. 25 : 11 ; 27 : 10.) At a still earlier period, God had spoken of Cyrus *by name*, as the

instrument through whom the restoration of Israel was to be accomplished. It was Cyrus, who should "say to Jerusalem, *Thou shalt be built*; and to the temple, *Thy foundations shall be laid.*" (Is. 44 : 28.) Accordingly, in the very first year of the reign of Cyrus, he "made proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying : "Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you, of all his people ? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, which is in Jerusalem. And whoso sojourneth in any place, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the free-will offerings for the house of God, which is in Jerusalem." (Ezra 1 : 2—4.)

If any doubt whether the captivity of the Jews had now continued seventy years, the question may be easily settled. It commenced

one year and two months previous to the death of Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, when Daniel and his three friends, with many others, were carried away. It continued through the entire reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, 43 years ; of Evil-Merodach, 2 years ; of Neriglissar, 4 years ; of Belshazzar, 17 years ; and of Darius the Mede, 2 years ; making a period of 69 years and two months. If we suppose the proclamation above quoted to have been issued in the tenth month of the first year of Cyrus (which is as early in the year as it could well be expected), we have precisely the term of 70 years, from the commencement of the captivity to the decree of restoration.

All history ascribes to Daniel the chief instrumentality in procuring this decree ; and the supposition is a very reasonable one. Daniel was now a venerable man, an old minister of state, famed for his great wisdom all over the East, and of long experience in the management of public affairs. It is likely, also, that he held the same station (which was

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one of the highest authority, next to the king) under Cyrus, which he had held before ; for we are told that “ he *prospered* in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” (Dan. 6 : 28.) He had learned from books, that the predicted years of captivity were now accomplished, and had been much in prayer for the restoration of his people. It is next to certain, therefore, that he would use his influence with Cyrus, to bring about this desirable event. It is evident from the proclamation of Cyrus, that he had seen and read those prophecies of Isaiah, in which he was designated as the restorer of the Jews ; and who so likely to make him acquainted with them, as his prime minister and chief counselor, Daniel ?

In consequence of the decree of Cyrus, the Jews and Israelites gathered themselves together out of the several parts of his empire, to the number of 43,000 ; with their servants, they numbered about 50,000. I say the Jews and *Israelites* gathered themselves together ; for the decree of emancipation extended to all

alike, and it is certain that many of the latter returned with the Jews. They had for their leaders Zerubbabel, the son of Salathiel, the son of Jehoiachim, of the seed royal, and Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, the high priest. Unto them were delivered, by the command of Cyrus, all the vessels of gold and of silver which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the old temple at Jerusalem. A part of these were now returned to Jerusalem, and the remainder were brought by Ezra, at a later period.

From the great number of Jews who accepted the invitation of Cyrus to return, it may be thought that only a few were left behind. But such was not the fact. Vast numbers, and those in general of the richest class, preferred to remain in Chaldea. The Jews have a proverb, that “it was only *the bran* that returned to Jerusalem; the fine flour staid behind.” Hence, from this time we find a multitude of Jews in those Eastern countries, where they continued until after the coming of Christ, and where their posterity

may be found unto this day. Babylon was long the seat of a distinguished school of Jewish learning, from which the most elaborate of the Talmuds was afterwards issued.*

The returning exiles under Zerubbabel and Jeshua arrived in Judea in the month Nisan, the first of their year, which answers to a part of our March and April. This was the second year of the reign of Cyrus, and 535 years before Christ. Their first effort was to provide themselves dwellings, and to commence the cultivation of their fields ; but in the month Tisri, the seventh of their year, they all assembled at Jerusalem, and united in celebrating their great annual festivals. At the same time, they made a contribution for the rebuilding of the temple, amounting to more than 350,000 dollars of our money ;—a

* We are told that "the gospel of the *circumcision* was committed unto Peter," (Gal. 2 : 7,) and he dates his first Epistle at *Babylon*. (1 Pet. 5 : 13.) It is much more likely that he was now among the Jews at the *literal* Babylon, or in its vicinity, than that he was at the *mystical* Babylon, or Rome.

prodigious sum to be offered by these poor returned exiles ; an example of liberality such as the world has rarely seen. In the second month of the next year, the foundations of the new temple were laid, with great solemnity ; some shouting, and others weeping, so that “the noise was heard afar off.” (Ez. 3 : 13.)

This second temple was of equal dimensions with the first, having been built upon the same foundation. Still, it was, in many respects, far inferior. It was not built of such costly materials as the first, or adorned with such splendid ornaments, or surrounded with such elegant courts and buildings. It was also lacking in those peculiar tokens of the Divine presence and favor,—the original ark of the covenant, the dazzling Shekinah, the Urim and Thummim, the holy anointing oil, and the holy fire. But all these defects were more than compensated, when the Lord whom they sought came suddenly to his temple, and Christ, the true Shekinah, honored it with his presence and worship. In this respect, the glory of the latter house did far exceed the

glory of the former; and the prediction of Haggai, who foretold that it should be so, had a complete fulfillment. (Hag. 2 : 9.)

When the Samaritans heard that the Jews had returned, and had commenced rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem, they sent messengers unto them, offering to assist them in the work, and to unite with them in acts of worship, alledging that, ever since the days of Esarhaddon, they had worshiped the same God with the Jews. But Zerubbabel and Jeshua, with the elders of the people, declined their proffered assistance and fellowship; and that for the following reasons : First, as these Samaritans were not Israelites, but descendants, in part, of those foreigners whom Esarhaddon had planted in the cities of Israel, they were not included in the decree of Cyrus. Then, secondly, they were not *true* worshipers of the God of Israel, but served him in connection with their idols. "They feared the Lord, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whence they had been taken." (2 Kings, 17 : 33.) Besides, the leaders of

the Jews had much reason to suspect them of improper motives. They had come, not to do them good, but hurt. They sought to be associated with them for purposes of mischief.

The sequel proved, that these suspicions were too well founded. Because the Jews declined their assistance and fellowship, the Samaritans became henceforth, their bitterest enemies. They strove to the utmost to embarrass and hinder them in their work. They could not, indeed, annul the decree of Cyrus ; but by bribes and slanders they contrived to prejudice his servants against them, and obstruct them in their important undertaking. For these causes, the building of the temple went slowly on, and was far from being completed, when Cyrus, their great patron and benefactor, died.

Cyrus was succeeded by his son Cambyzes, called by Ezra, Ahasuerus,* (chap. 4 : 6.) To him the enemies of the Jews made supplication against them ; and though he would not revoke

* This Ahasuerus was not the husband of Esther. His reign dates at a much later period.

his father's decree, still, he rather discouraged than aided the work at Jerusalem.

Cambyses died, after a reign of between seven and eight years, and was succeeded by Smerdis, an usurper, whom Ezra calls Artaxerxes, (chap. 4: 7.) Him the enemies of the Jews undertook to influence, and with more success. They wrote him a letter, a copy of which is preserved by Ezra, (chap. 4: 7—16,) speaking of Jerusalem as being of old "a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings," and praying that the rebuilding of it and of the temple might be stopped. This had the desired effect. Forthwith, Smerdis issued an order against the Jews, which put a stop to their work during the remainder of his reign; which, happily, continued only a few months.

The successor of Smerdis was the renowned Darius Hystaspis, who reigned thirty-six years. Although on the death of Smerdis, his decree against Jerusalem was no longer in force, yet, discouraged by opposition, and too much engrossed in their own concerns, the people neglected to enter, as they should have done,

upon the work of the temple ; and for their negligence in this respect, they were visited with drought and famine. They were also stirred up to their duty, by the fervid appeals and remonstrances of the prophet Haggai. "Is it time for you, O ye people, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste ? Go ye up to the mountain and bring wood, and build the house, and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord." (Hag. 1 : 4—8.)

These and other like exhortations and promises had the desired effect. The people arose, almost immediately, under the direction of their leaders, began to collect materials, and to carry forward the work of the house.

Again, therefore, the Samaritans were excited to opposition. They applied to Tatnai, who was prefect, under Darius, of Syria and Palestine, and to Shethar-boznai, governor of Samaria, and persuaded them to go up to Jerusalem, and put a stop to proceedings there. But Tatnai, who was evidently a man of justice and moderation, when he had sur-

veyed the work at Jerusalem, simply inquired of the Jews as to the authority under which they acted. And when they showed him the decree of Cyrus, he wrote to Darius, to know whether Cyrus had ever issued such a decree, and what his own pleasure in the case might be. In consequence of this inquiry, Darius made search, and found the decree of Cyrus ; he affirmed its authenticity ; he directed Tatnai and Shethar-boznai to see it fully and effectually executed. He commanded that the tribute of the Samaritans should be paid over to the Jews, and that they should be liberally assisted with money, and with whatever else they needed. He finally ordered, that if any one should farther oppose them, or attempt in any way to hinder them in their work, a gallows should be made of the timber of his house, and that he himself should be hanged thereon.

From this time the work of the temple went so rapidly on, than in three years more it was entirely finished. Twenty years had this second temple now been building, during the

greater part of which time, the people had been guided, cheered and strengthened, by the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah. It adds new interest to these prophecies, and helps to a right understanding of them, to remember the times and occasions on which they were uttered.

In the sixth year of the reign of Darius Hystaspes, and on the third day of the twelfth Jewish month, called the month Adar, the new temple at Jerusalem was dedicated. It was to all an occasion of great solemnity and rejoicing, when there were offered up "one hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, and four hundred lambs, besides twelve he goats for a sin offering, according to the number of the tribes of Israel." (Ez. 6 : 17.) We have *here* an intimation, that the persons concerned in this transaction were not merely Jews, but members, to some extent, of all the tribes of Israel.

On the fourteenth day of the next month, which was the month Nisan, the passover was celebrated at the new temple, not only by

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those who had returned from captivity, but by all who were prepared to unite in the solemnity. "Seven days they kept the feast of unleavened bread with joy ; for the Lord had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the God of Israel."

When the temple had been built and dedicated, the Samaritans claimed that they were no longer under obligations to pay custom or tribute for this object. But on referring the question to Darius, he ordered that they should observe his edict, and pay their tribute as before. It was now needed for the *support* of the temple, as it had been previously for the building of it. From this period, we hear of no farther opposition from the Samaritans, until the time of Sanballat and Nehemiah.

After the dedication of the temple, Darius reigned about thirty years. He was a prince of great wisdom, energy, clemency, and justice, and next to Cyrus, was the most distinguished benefactor of Israel who had yet

appeared. It was through his favor, especially, that the temple of God at Jerusalem was finished, and that public worship was there established and maintained. He was unfortunate in some of his military expeditions, more especially those against the Scythians and Athenians. It was during his reign, that the Persians lost the famous battle of Marathon. But he extended the empire of Cyrus in other directions, having added to it in the East a considerable part of India, and in the West, Thrace, Macedon, and the Ionian isles.

It was during this reign, that the celebrated Persian philosopher, Zoroaster,* flourished. He was not the author of the Magian philosophy, but only the reformer of it. And the principal improvements which he introduced are supposed to have been borrowed from the Jewish Scriptures, with which he must have had a considerable acquaintance. He pro-

* There seems to have been a Chaldean Zoroaster, who flourished at a much earlier period. He may have been the *author* of Magianism, of which the Persian Zoroaster was but the reformer.

fessed, like Mahomet and other imposters, to have been in heaven, and to have learned the doctrines of religion there. He undertook to reform Magianism in its *first principle*, which was *Dualism* ;—a god of light, and a god of darkness ; the one the author of all that is good, and the other of all that is evil. In opposition to this, Zoroaster taught the doctrine of one Supreme God, the prime original and author of all things ; and that the two great leaders in the conflict going on in the world are both of them derived and inferior divinities. The struggle between good and evil, he held “ would continue to the end of the world ; that then there will be a general resurrection, and day of judgment, in which all will be treated according to their works ; after which the angel of darkness and his followers shall go away to a world of their own, where they shall suffer in eternal darkness the punishment of their evil deeds ; whereas the angel of light, and his disciples, shall go to a world of light, to receive the endless rewards of their goodness. From this period, the two

classes are to be forever separated, and light and darkness are no more to be mingled to all eternity."

Like the more ancient Magians, Zoroaster abhorred images, but taught his followers to worship the sun and the fire; not that he considered either of these as a god, but that they were the special residences and brightest exhibitions of God. The book containing the revelations of Zoroaster is called the *Zendavista*; or by contraction, the *Zend*. He presented a copy of it to Darius Hystaspes, bound in twelve volumes, each of which consisted of one hundred skins of vellum. The book is still preserved among the Magians of the East, and regarded by them with great veneration. The wise men who came from the East to worship our Saviour at his birth, were undoubtedly philosophers of this class. Pretended fragments of the *Zend* have been published at different times, more particularly by the Gnostics and New Platonists after the time of Christ; but these are entitled to little confidence.

Xerxes, sometimes called the great, the son of Darius and grandson of Cyrus, succeeded his father in the kingdom. He confirmed to the Jews at Jerusalem all the privileges which had been granted them by his father. In particular, he ordered that the tribute from the Samaritans for the support of the temple should be paid. In the third year of his reign, Jeshua, the venerable high-priest at Jerusalem, died, and was succeeded in office by Jehoiakim his son. The reign of Xerxes is chiefly remarkable for his most unfortunate expedition into Greece. His preparations for this, in men, in money, and in naval armaments were immense. As had been predicted by Daniel, he literally "stirred up *all* against the realm of Grecia." (chap 11 : 2.) He entered into a league with the Carthaginians, by which they were to assist him with an army, and with ships. He drew together from all parts of his vast empire such a body of men as the world had never seen. According to Herodotus, his active forces, when he arrived at the straits of Thermopylæ, amounted

to 2,642,610 men ; while the servants, eunuchs, women, sutlers, and others who followed the camp, were thought to be as many more. Here then was a collection of more than five millions of souls, brought together at a single point, for the subjugation of Greece. Among them, Josephus informs us (and the statement is quite probable) were many Jews.

My readers have all heard of the manner in which this unwieldy army of Asiatics was received at Thermopylæ, by Leonidas and his invincible Spartans. They have read of the battle of Salamis, where the Greeks took and destroyed hundreds of the Persian ships, and obliged the rest to flee to the coasts of Asia. Upon the loss of his fleet, Xerxes, with the greater part of his army, hastened back into Asia, and took up their winter quarters at Sardis. Meanwhile, the Carthaginians, on whom he had relied to assist him, were so totally defeated in Sicily, that scarcely a man remained to tell of the disaster. On his retiring from Greece, Xerxes left Mardonius, one of his generals behind, with 350,000 men.

These encountered the Greeks the next year at Plataea, where they were utterly defeated, and the most of them slain.

Thus ended this ill-planned and worse conducted expedition into Greece. Xerxes, on hearing of the defeat of his army at Plataea, and of the destruction of the remainder of his fleet at Mycale, (which occurred the same day) lost no time in getting back to Persia. He only stopped to destroy and to plunder all the idolatrous temples which came in his way. This he is supposed to have done, for two reasons: First, being himself a Magian, and a follower of Zoroaster, he was opposed to idol worship. And, secondly, he needed the spoils of the temples, to indemnify him for the enormous expenses of the war. It was at this time that he plundered the temples, and destroyed the images of Babylon. He overthrew the famed tower of Belus, as he passed on his way through Babylon to Shushan his capital; thus fulfilling, without knowing it, the predictions of Jeremiah: "Bel is confounded; Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded; her images are broken in pieces."

“I will do judgment upon all the graven images of Babylon.” (Jer. 50: 2; 51: 52.) From this time, we hear of no great Persian expedition into Greece; but soon the tide of war flows in the other direction, and Greece is pouring her armies into Persia.

The remainder of the reign of Xerxes was far from being honorable to him. After his return into Persia, he became involved in shameful domestic troubles, which could only be terminated by cruelty and blood. When these were at length adjusted, he gave himself up to luxury and ease, minding nothing but the gratification of his pleasures and lusts; on which account one of his military officers conspired against him, and slew him in his bed. He was succeeded by his third son, known in history as Artaxerxes Longimanus. He was called Longimanus, on account of the length of his arms and hands, with which, it is said, he could touch his knees when standing upright.

The account of his reign, and of the distinguished favor which he showed to the Jews, will be given in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III.

The Medo-Persian Empire continued. Artaxerxes Longimanus, Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

MY last chapter closed with some account of the reign of Xerxes, and of the condition of the Jews under his government. His successor, as I said, was his third son, Artaxerxes Longimanus, known in Scripture as Ahasuerus, the husband of Esther.* Artaxerxes had great difficulties to contend with in the beginning of his reign, more especially from those who had slain his father, and from his eldest brother, the governor of Bactria. But by his energy and wisdom, these were at length overcome; after which he set himself to reform

* There is some doubt as to which of the Persian kings was the husband of Esther. Some have supposed it was Darius Hystaspes, others that it was Xerxes the great. I acquiesce in the conclusion of Prideaux, that it was Artaxerxes Longimanus.

abuses and disorders in the empire, to call the governors of provinces to an account, and to remove such as had proved themselves unworthy. By these means, he not only strengthened himself in the kingdom, but (what is more) in the affections and confidence of his subjects.

In the third year of his reign, when every thing had been rightly established, he appointed a solemn festival to be observed in his palace, for the term of one hundred and eighty days. And when these were concluded, he made another for the people that were in Shushan, seven days. His queen, at the same time, made a like entertainment, in her apartments, for the women. "On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded his seven chamberlains to bring in the queen, with the crown royal upon her head, that he might show to the princes and people her beauty." But the fair queen resented this injunction, as being inconsistent with her dignity, and unbecoming the modesty of her sex. She would not come.

Upon this, the king was highly incensed, and called around him his wise counselors, that he might confer with them concerning the matter. Believing the example of disobedience which the queen had set to be one of dangerous influence in the realm, they advised that she should be forthwith deposed and divorced, that she should come no more into the presence of the king, and that her royal estate should be given to another better than herself. This advice was accepted of the king, and a decree went forth for its immediate execution.

The disgrace of queen Vashti prepared the way for the elevation of Esther ; whose story is told, with inimitable beauty, in the book which bears her name. Her Jewish name was Hadassah, but her Persian name was Esther. She was instrumental, as we shall see, in the hands of God, of promoting, in various ways, the interests of her people ; more especially of delivering them from a threatened destruction, and of effecting the ruin of their proud and cruel enemy. In memory of this deliverance, an annual festival was long observed

among the Jews; the feast of *Purim*, or *the lots*. In the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes, Ezra obtained of him and his counselors a commission to go up to Jerusalem, with as many of the Jews as were pleased to accompany him, with full power to settle the state and reform the church of Israel, and to govern both according to their own laws. This Ezra, who was a priest by descent, was a very learned and holy man. He was a faithful, useful, and Divinely inspired man. He is spoken of as “a ready scribe in the law of his God.”

The commission which he received from Artaxerxes is given at large in the seventh chapter of the book of Ezra. It is certainly very ample, granting every favor and all the authority which he could desire. He was authorized to take with him any number of his people who were minded to go, and any amount in gold and silver, and in vessels for the house of the Lord, which might be contributed. “And whatsoever more shall be needed for the house of thy God, bestow it out of the king’s treas-

ure house. I Artaxerxes do make a decree to all the treasurers that are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily. And thou, Ezra, according to the wisdom of thy God which is in thee, set magistrates and judges which may judge all the people that are beyond the river. And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment." (Ez. 7: 20—26.)

From the purport of this remarkable decree, it may be inferred that Ezra was in high reputation at the Persian court for integrity and wisdom; otherwise, such powers and largesses had never been entrusted to him. It is further probable, that the hands of Mordecai and Esther were in the thing, to help it forward; because, without such intercessors, it would hardly have been thought of, and much less executed.

Having received his commission, Ezra com-

menced his journey from Babylon on the first day of the first Jewish month—about the middle of our March. He halted a little at the river Ahava, till the rest of his company came up; when in a solemn fast he commended both himself and them to the protection of the Almighty. They then set forward on their way to Jerusalem, where they all safely arrived, on the first day of the fifth month, having been just four months on the journey.

Arrived at the temple, Ezra delivered to the keepers of it the gifts and offerings which had been made by the king and his princes, and the people of Israel who remained in Chaldea, amounting to one hundred talents of gold, and six hundred and fifty talents of silver, together with vessels of gold and silver for the service of the temple, of exceeding value. He then entered upon his government, according to the king's decree, and continued in it, much to the edification and comfort of his people, for the next thirteen years.

It is the opinion of Dean Prideaux, and other eminent chronologists, that the seventy weeks

of Daniel, at the close of which the Messiah was to be cut off, had their beginning with the above commission to Ezra, which was given in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes. The prediction of Daniel is in the following words: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon the holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." (Dan. 9: 24—27.) It has been generally understood, that in these seventy prophetic weeks, or 490 days, each day stands for a year; so that the whole

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period designated is 490 years. Now it is a remarkable fact, that the period intervening between the seventh year of Artaxerxes, when the above commission was given to Ezra, and the year in which our Lord was crucified, is precisely 490 years.\* I make this statement concerning the time, as one that may be relied upon, without going at all into the disputed questions respecting the true import and meaning of this interesting prophecy.

It would be needless to repeat, in this connection, the story of Haman's defeat, and Mordecai's advancement, and the deliverance of the Jews from meditated destruction through the intercession of queen Esther. These events took place in the twelfth and thirteenth years of the reign of Artaxerxes. For a narrative of them I refer my young readers to the book of Esther, with which no human account of the matter can compare. If any one doubts

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\* Our Saviour was crucified in the year of the Julian period 4746. The seventh year of Artaxerxes was the year of the Julian period 4256. The difference between these two numbers is 490.

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that “pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall;” or doubts as to the odiousness and wretchedness of unsated malice, envy, and revenge, let him ponder the history of Haman, as recorded in the book of God.

When Ezra arrived at Jerusalem, he found the people much degenerated and corrupted, and much in need of a thorough reformation; and such a reformation he immediately attempted. He obliged those persons, who had connected themselves in marriage with the people of the land, to put away their strange wives, and conform in this respect to the law of Moses. He took much pains to instruct the people in the law, multiplying copies of it, and causing it to be read and expounded on great public occasions. By degrees he brought the Jewish church into a state, in which it remained to the time of the Saviour.

Nor was this the only important work which he accomplished. Being an inspired man, and one thoroughly instructed in the Scriptures, he was led to collect and revise, and

give to the church a correct edition of those holy records ; or of such of them as were in existence when he lived. In other words, with the exception of some fragments, and a very few of the later books, *he settled the canon of the Old Testament Scriptures* ; and so settled it, that it received the sanction of our Saviour and his Apostles, and has been accepted by Jews and Christians in all later times. This was the great work of Ezra's life. For this he will be remembered, in gratitude and honor, so long as the Bible is read, or the world endures.

It has been questioned whether it was Ezra, or some later teacher, who introduced the worship of the synagogue into the church of Israel. It is very certain that there were no synagogues in the land, previous to his time, and that they were in use shortly after his death. It would seem also that they must have been of Divine institution, or they would not have been frequented and sanctioned by our Saviour. Neither can it be doubted that they were of great advantage to the Israel-

ites, tending, as they necessarily must have done, to multiply copies of the sacred writings, and to promote a better understanding of them among the people. Previous to the establishment of synagogues, the people, having no religious worship but that of the temple, and being comparatively ignorant of the law, were perpetually running into idolatry. The gods of the nations round about them were a constant snare to them. But after the introduction of synagogues, in which the law was read and explained, they were as much averse to idolatry, as they had before been addicted to it. And so it has been with the Jews ever since. They have fallen into other sins, but with the worship of idols they have not been chargeable.

But the question returns as to the origin of the synagogues. The Scriptures do not acquaint us with their origin. But we know that Ezra was in the habit of reading and expounding the law to the people ; and the probability is, that the synagogues grew up from the influence of his example, if they were not

established by his direct authority. If the synagogue was a Divine institution, it must have originated with some *inspired* man; and who so likely to have introduced it as Ezra?

Some have supposed that the Hêbrew vowel points were introduced by Ezra, and that they are of equal authority with the sacred text. But the arguments against this supposition seem to me conclusive. 1. In the first place, the copies of the Old Testament, made use of by the Jews in their synagogues, have ever been, and still are, without the points. 2. The more ancient various readings of the sacred text have respect all of them to the letters, and not to the points; thus showing that the points are not of a high antiquity. 3. The same conclusion we draw from another fact, viz., that the ancient Cabbalists derive none of their mysteries from the points, but all of them from the letters. 4. If we compare the more ancient versions of the Old Testament, as the Septuagint, and the Chaldee paraphrases, with our pointed Hêbrew Bibles, we find that they do not always agree; showing

that the authors of those versions did not read the text according to the present punctuation. 5. In neither of the Talmuds is any mention made of the vowel points; as there certainly would have been, had they been in existence, and of authority, when the Talmuds were written.

It is no part of my present purpose to give a history, or to detract from the importance, of the Hebrew vowel points. That they are of essential service in learning and using the Hebrew language, both Jew and Gentile now agree. But that they originated with Ezra, or with any other inspired man, or that any Divine authority is to be attached to them, cannot I think be maintained. They probably originated with the Masorites, or Jewish critics, long after the canon of the Old Testament was closed.

I have said that the practice of reading and expounding the law commenced with Ezra. This led to the setting apart of an order of men for this purpose. Their expositions, accompanied often with traditionary legends,

soon came to have authority, and an antiquity was ascribed to them to which they had no claim. In short we have now arrived at the period, when the oral, traditionary law began to appear ; and with many it was regarded as of equal authority with the written law. As years rolled on, the traditions were multiplied and increased, till in the time of our Saviour, the written law was quite obscured and nullified by them. Hence we hear our Lord complaining of the Pharisees and Scribes, that they “ had made the commandment of God of none effect, by their traditions.” (Mat. 15 : 6.)

At length the traditions became so numerous, that they could no longer be handed down orally, as before. They were committed to writing, and constitute the substance of the Jewish Talmuds. The Talmuds consist of two parts, the Mishna and the Gemara. The Mishna is made up of the old traditions ; the Gemara, of the comments of the Rabbins on these traditions. It is supposed that the Talmuds began to be *written* about two hun-

dred years subsequent to the time of our Saviour.

That Ezra was an eminently wise and good man, I have before remarked, and his works declare. His administration was one of great value, not only to the Jews at Jerusalem, but to the whole church of God. Few men have ever lived, to whom the church is more indebted, than to this venerable scribe of the law. Still, he seems to have been more a priest, than a ruler; more a scholar and teacher, than an efficient magistrate. After his utmost endeavors to reform abuses, and to carry forward the work of the Lord, irregularities and abuses crept in unawares, and the enclosing and fortifying of the city was not accomplished. This is evident from the miserable account of things which was brought to Nehemiah, then in Persia, and which led to his appointment as the successor of Ezra, in the government.

Nehemiah was a Jew, whose ancestors had formerly lived at Jerusalem; but his genealogy is not given. He was now an inhabitant

of Shushan, the royal city of Persia ; was a man of indomitable energy and profound wisdom ; was the possessor of great wealth ; and held an important office, near the king. While in this station of honor and influence, he learned from certain Jews who had come from Jerusalem, that his brethren there were in great affliction and reproach ; that the walls of the city were broken down ; that its gates were burned with fire ; and that though the temple had been rebuilt and its worship restored, the city remained comparatively desolate.

When Nehemiah heard these things, he “sat down and wept, and mourned, and fasted certain days, and prayed before the God of heaven.” He resolved, at the same time, that he would apply to the king for permission and authority to repair to Jerusalem, and set up its gates, and build its broken walls. Accordingly, he sought an opportunity, when it came his turn to wait upon the king, and when queen Esther was sitting beside him, to present a petition to this effect, which was readily

and liberally granted. A royal decree was issued for rebuilding the walls and gates of Jerusalem, and Nehemiah was sent thither, as governor of Judea, to put it in execution. And to do him the greater honor, the king sent a guard of horse with him, to conduct him in safety to his Province. He also wrote letters to all the governors beyond the Euphrates, to aid him in his work, and to the keeper of his forests to allow him as much timber out of them as he should need. Thus commissioned and furnished, Nehemiah went up to Jerusalem, took upon him the administration of affairs, and immediately commenced the great work for which he had come. All this took place in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes, and from this time the administration of Ezra closed.

No sooner had the Jews, under their new governor, commenced repairing the gates and walls of their city, than they were assailed by their old adversaries, the Samaritans, and other surrounding nations. Prominent among these were Sanballat the Horonite, Tobias the

Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, who gave them all the disturbance in their power. They assailed the Jews, not only with derision and reproach, with treachery and deceit, but by threats of *force* and *violence*; so that while a part of the people labored on the wall, another part were under arms for their defence; and all had their arms at hand, to repel an assault, if one should be made. In consequence of the excellent arrangements of the governor, and the diligence and perseverance of the people, the wall of Jerusalem was repaired in less than two months, the gates were set up, and a public dedication was celebrated, with great solemnity, by all the Jews.

Having thus accomplished the first great object of his mission, Nehemiah next set himself to ease the people of their burthens, and to accomplish other necessary reforms; in all which he was essentially aided by the counsel and coöperation of Ezra. Previous to this time, the rich among the Jews had been in the habit of exacting usury of their poorer brethren, and oppressing them in other ways;

so that many had been constrained to alienate their possessions, and even to sell their children into servitude, to procure bread for the support of themselves and families. Upon hearing these things, Nehemiah resolved to correct the evil at once ; and so, having called the people together, he showed them how grossly they had violated the law of God, and how much their oppressions tended to provoke his wrath. Whereupon it was resolved by the whole assembly, not only that these odious exactions should cease, but that full restitution should be made to the poor, of all that had been taken from them.

The next thing projected by Nehemiah was to increase the population of Jerusalem, and fill it up with houses and inhabitants ; for while it was unfortified, without walls and gates, few had been inclined to take up their abode there. In furtherance of this object, he first prevailed upon the rulers, the elders, and the great men of the nation, to build themselves houses within the city ; and then others, influenced by their example, voluntarily offered to do the same.

And of the rest of the people, every tenth man was taken by lot, and obliged to come and settle in Jerusalem. In this way the city was soon filled with inhabitants, and recovered something of its ancient magnificence. Herodotus, speaking of it shortly after this time,* compares it with Sardis, the capital of lesser Asia.

In carrying out his plans as to the settlement of the country, Nehemiah found it necessary to inquire very carefully into the genealogies ; that he might know from what tribes and families individuals were descended, and to what portions of the country they were to be assigned. With characteristic energy this matter was carried through, and the result is recorded in the seventh chapter of Nehemiah.

It was about this time (under the direction of the governor) that Ezra engaged—more publicly and formally than ever before—in the reading and exposition of the law. The occasion selected was one of the great festivals, which occurred in the seventh month, when

* Under the name of Cadytis.

all the people were assembled at Jerusalem. The reading was continued by Ezra and his assistants, from day to day, until the whole was read and expounded to the people. In the language of the sacred historian, "they read in the book of the law distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." (Neh. 8 : 8.)

Nor was this effort of the excellent governor and the venerable priest without good results. The people were greatly affected in view of their transgressions, a day of fasting was observed, a public confession of sins were made, and reformation was promised. A solemn covenant was entered into by the whole congregation, that they would abstain from those *particular sins* into which they had more scandalously fallen, and that they would observe the law of God in time to come. From this period, as I have before remarked, the public reading and expounding of the law was more frequently practiced, not only on the great festivals at Jerusalem, but in the cities and villages of Judea ; and public buildings, or

synagogues, were ere long erected, for the accommodation of the people on these occasions.

When Nehemiah had been twelve years governor of Judea, he was under a necessity of returning to the Persian court. Indeed, he left his place at court, in the first instance, under a promise to return. He was absent from Jerusalem on this service about five years, when he was sent back, with a new commission from the king. And by this time, his return was greatly needed. Since, during his absence, some flagrant abuses and corruptions had been tolerated. In particular, he found that his old enemy, Tobiah the Ammonite, had allied himself in marriage to the family of the high-priest; and for his special accommodation, the high-priest had assigned to him one of the chambers in the house of the Lord. But Nehemiah was not long in removing this evil. He cast forth, at once, "all the house-hold stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber," and commanded it to be cleansed, and restored to its former use.

Nehemiah also found that, during his absence, the portions of the singers and Levites had not been given them; so that they had been constrained to forsake their appropriate employments about the temple, and seek a support by the labors of the field. This evil also was soon corrected. Nehemiah got the rulers together, and chided them, saying: "Why is the house of God forsaken?" Under his vigorous administration, the Levites were quickly restored to their places, and the tithes of corn, and wine, and oil, were duly rendered.

The next abuse with which Nehemiah grappled, was the violation of the Sabbath. There were those among the Jews who trode their wine presses on the Sabbath, and brought sheaves and all manner of burthens into Jerusalem. Also the Tyrian merchants brought fish, and all kinds of ware, and sold them in Jerusalem on that holy day. For these things Nehemiah strongly reproved the rulers and nobles of the city, saying: "Did not your fathers thus? And did not our God bring all

this evil upon us, and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel, by profaning the Sabbath." (Neh. 13 : 18.) From this time, Nehemiah commanded that the gates of Jerusalem should be shut, the evening before the Sabbath, and that no secular business should be performed, either within the city, or without the walls.

At the same time, Nehemiah discovered that many of the Jews, and some even of the priests, had corrupted themselves by intermarriages with the Philistines, the Moabites, and Ammonites. With his characteristic energy, he attacked this evil also, and had the happiness to see it speedily removed. Those who had taken strange wives were obliged either to put them away, or themselves to be separated from the congregation of the Lord.

In the latter of these classes was Manasseh, one of the sons of the high priest. He had married a daughter of the notorious Sanballat, governor of Samaria, and refused to put his wife away. Wherefore, says Nehemiah, "I chased him from me." Manasseh fled to

Samaria, carrying with him a copy of the book of the law, and persuaded Sanballat to build a temple for him on mount Gerizim, after the same pattern with that at Jerusalem. We have here the origin of the Samaritan Pentateuch, and of the worship on mount Gerizim, which continued until after the coming of Christ. We have also one of the causes of that inveterate hatred of the Samaritans, which continued so long among the Jews.

It was during the prevalence of those corruptions which had crept in at Jerusalem, during the absence of Nehemiah, that Malachi, the last of the Hebrew prophets, made his appearance. He does not, like Haggai and Zechariah, reprove the people for neglecting to restore the fallen temple, but for neglecting what appertained to the true worship of God in it. In short, the corruptions which he charges upon the Jews were the same which Nehemiah undertook to correct on his return; which leads to the conclusion that Malachi must have lived and prophesied in these days.

How long after this Nehemiah lived, or when he died, we are not informed. The reformation which he so effectually accomplished, after his return from Persia, is the last of his history of which we have any knowledge. He outlived his great prince and patron, Artaxerxes, and was retained in office by Darius Nothus, his son. I need not here enter on a minute delineation of his character. This is best known from his public acts. That he was a man of great firmness, decision and energy, as well as goodness,—“a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that did well”—is very obvious. That he had a quick insight into human character, and much experience and wisdom in the direction of public affairs, is equally obvious. In short, he was in some sense a *model magistrate*, raised up and qualified for the particular service to which he was called, and to whom his nation were under the highest obligations. I ought to say a word, before closing, of his *liberality* and *public spirit*. During the whole time that he was in office, he sustained the honors

of it with a princely magnificence, and all at his own personal expense. There was provided for his table daily, as he himself tells us, "one ox, six choice sheep, together with fowls and wine;" yet for all this he would receive no salary or support from the people, because their burthens were heavy upon them. (Neh. 5: 18.)

Artaxerxes Longimanus, or, as he is styled in the book of Esther, Ahasuerus, reigned over the whole Persian empire forty-one years. His administration, in general, was peaceful and prosperous, and *eminently favorable to the Jews*. He reconquered the Egyptians, who had revolted from him, and held them in subjection to the end of his reign. He succeeded early in concluding a peace with the Greeks, which added much to his own security and tranquillity. During the latter part of his reign, the Peloponessian war was raging in Greece, which furnished sufficient employment for that restless and turbulent people, without turning their arms against the Persians. It was at this time, that Socrates commenced his phi-

losophical career at Athens, and that Plato, his most distinguished disciple and follower, was born.

Artaxerxes was succeeded—after some petty domestic struggles—by his son Darius Nothus; of whose reign, so far as the church of God is concerned in it, I shall give some account in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

*The Medo-Persian Empire, till its overthrow.
The Grecian, to the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus.*

MY last chapter was entirely occupied with the state of affairs among the Jews, during the long reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus. It was under him that Jerusalem was rebuilt, and that Ezra and Nehemiah were successively appointed to be governors of Judea. With the closing chapter of the book of Nehemiah, the sacred history of the Old Testament closes. Nehemiah was at this time an aged man, and the probability is, that he died soon after at Jerusalem.

After him, there seem not to have been any more governors in Judea. This country was annexed to the province of Cœlo-Syria, and was subject to its prefect, who resided at

Damascus. The chief ruler at Jerusalem, in civil affairs as well as ecclesiastical, was the high-priest.

During the government of Nehemiah, Elia-shib was high-priest. He was a grandson of Jeshua, who came with the first company of exiles from Babylon. He was succeeded in office by his son Joiada. It may be feared that neither of these men had any strict regard for the religion of their fathers ; since the former was allied in marriage to Tobiah, the Ammonite, and prepared for him a chamber in the house of the Lord ; and the latter was similarly connected with Sanballat the Horonite, as stated in the last chapter.

Darius Nothus was now on the throne of the Persian empire. He succeeded in quelling revolts and rebellions, and in keeping his vast empire together. By aiding the Lacedemonians, he enabled them to overcome the Athenians, and thus to put an end to the Peloponessian war. But this only left the Lacedemonians at liberty to invade the Persian

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provinces in Asia, whereby great injury accrued both to the king and his successors.

Darius died, after a reign of nineteen years, and was succeeded by his son, Artaxerxes Mnemon. Mnemon had a younger brother, whose name was Cyrus, who governed the provinces of lesser Asia. Cyrus raised a great army, composed in part of Greeks, and advanced into Persia for the purpose of driving his brother from the throne. They came to a battle on the plains of Cunaxa, near Babylon, where Cyrus was slain. The Greeks who accompanied him, under the direction of Xenophon, effected a retreat of more than two thousand miles,—the longest and most remarkable, that was ever made through an enemy's country. This expedition and retreat are the subject of Xenophon's *Anabasis*. The *Cyropedia* of Xenophon relates to the elder Cyrus,—that great monarch of Persia by whom Babylon was overthrown.

The reign of Artaxerxes Mnemon was long, and on the whole prosperous. He is represented as a mild and generous prince, who

ruled with clemency and justice, and whose name was revered and honored throughout the empire. He had long and bloody contests with the Greeks, more especially the Lacedemonians, who harassed and plundered the provinces of lesser Asia. When these were quelled, he undertook the subjugation of Egypt, which had been for some time in a state of revolt, but he did not live to see this object accomplished.

In the thirty-fourth year of Artaxerxes Mnemon, Joiada, the high priest at Jerusalem died, and was succeeded by Jonathan his son. This Jonathan was a man of blood; for when one of his brothers aspired to the high priest's office, and undertook to drive him from it, he fell upon him and slew him, in the inner court of the temple. By this murderous act, Jonathan greatly incensed the government of Syria and Palestine, who, in punishment of it, imposed a fine upon the temple. He condemned the priests to pay him for every lamb they offered in sacrifice, a tribute of fifty

drachms, which is about eight dollars of our money.

Artaxerxes died at the age of ninety-four years; forty-six of which he reigned over the Persian empire. He was succeeded by his cruel and wicked son Artaxerxes Ochus. He made his way to the throne by blood, and when he had secured it, he slew most of the members of the royal family, without regard to age, sex, or kindred. There were disturbances in the provinces, at the commencement of this King's reign, but by the energy of his government, these were, ere long, subdued, when he bent all his force for the reduction of Egypt. For this purpose, he put himself at the head of his army, and marched in person into Syria and Phœnicia. He inflicted a terrible destruction on the city of Sidon, and because he suspected the Jews of favoring the Sidonians, he had a quarrel with them. He sent an army into Judea, besieged and took Jericho, and made many of the Jews captives. A part of these he took with him into Egypt, and a part he sent away into Hyrcania, and planted them



on the shores of the Caspian sea. He soon effected the subjugation of Egypt, and drove their King into exile in Ethiopia. This King (Nectanebus by name) was the last native Egyptian that ever reigned on the throne of Egypt. From that time to the present, Egypt has been governed by strangers according to the prophecy of Ezekiel: "It shall be the basest of Kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations; for I will diminish them, that they shall rule over the nations no more." (Ezek. 29: 15.)

After the reduction of Egypt and the other revolted provinces, Ochus gave himself up to his pleasures, spending his whole time in indolence and luxury. He died after he had reigned twenty-one years, having been poisoned by Bagoas, his favorite eunuch.

In the third year of Ochus, Alexander the great was born, he who was destined so soon to effect the overthrow of Persia. In the eleventh year of his reign, Plato, the celebrated Athenian philosopher, died. Seven years later, died Jonathan, the high priest at Jerusalem.



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He was succeeded by Jaddua, his son, who is the last of the high priests whose names occur in the Old Testament. (See Neh. 12 : 11.)

After the death of Ochus, Bagoas, his murderer, placed Arses, his youngest son upon the throne. But being offended with him, he slew him, when he had reigned only two years. The wretch now gave the throne to Darius Codomannus, a descendant of Darius Nothus, but not a son of the late king. Not finding him so obsequious as he desired, Bagoas undertook to remove him, too, by poison ; but Darius, being advised of the fact, compelled him to drink the potion himself. In this way, he destroyed the traitor, and became thoroughly settled in the kingdom. Darius is represented as of an imposing stature, of great personal bravery, and of a mild and generous disposition. In ordinary times, he might have reigned as long and as happily as any of his predecessors ; but having the genius of Alexander to contend with, he was not able to stand against it.

Shortly after his father's death, Alexander,

being now about twenty-one years of age, was appointed generalissimo of all the Greeks; and each of the Grecian cities agreed to furnish its quota of men and money for carrying on a war against the Persians. Thus furnished, this brave young man crossed the Hellespont into Asia, in the second year of the reign of Darius. His army at this time consisted of only 30,000 men; nor had he the means of supporting them for more than thirty days. Still, he was not discouraged. He trusted to his good fortune, and to the providence of God, and providence favored him in a most remarkable manner. In a few days, he gained a complete victory over a Persian army, five times as great as his own, at the river Granicus, which put him in possession of a vast amount of treasure and of all the provinces of lesser Asia. The year following, he came to the still more decisive battle of Issus, in which he defeated an army of 600,000 Persians, and left 100,000 dead upon the field. Darius himself hardly escaped, while his camp, his baggage, his mother, his wife, his

children, all fell into the enemy's hands. In consequence of this victory, Damascus, with its immense wealth, came into possession of the conqueror, and with it the entire province of Syria.

Alexander now bent his course southward, in the direction of Phenicia and Egypt. Most of the cities submitted to him without a struggle; but the siege and the conquest of Tyre cost him a great effort, and many lives, and what, perhaps, was still more vexatious, it retarded him for months in his career of blood.

This object being accomplished, the conqueror next turned his steps towards Jerusalem. The Jews, unwilling to forfeit the friendship of the Persians, had refused to grant him supplies, during the siege of Tyre; and now he was intending to punish them for their disobedience. But God interposed in a most remarkable manner for their deliverance. In a vision of the night, he directed Jaddua, the high priest, not to fight with Alexander, but to go out to him, in his pontifical robes, with the priests following him in their proper

attire, and all the people in white garments. Accordingly, Jaddua prepared to do as he was directed. The next day, he went out of the city, attended by the priests and people in a long and sacred procession, and waited in the most solemn manner the coming of the king. As soon as Alexander saw him, he was struck with a profound astonishment and awe. He leaped from his chariot, and rushing forward, bowed down before the high priest, and did him reverence, to the great surprise of his generals, and of all who attended him. And when he was inquired of as to the reason of what he had done, he said, that he did not so much honor the priest, as that Divine Being whose priest he was. For, says he, "When I was at Dio in Macedonia, and was there deliberating with myself how I should carry on this war against the Persians, and was much in doubt as to the issue of the undertaking, this very person, and in this very habit, appeared to me in a dream, and encouraged me to lay aside all distrust about the matter, and pass boldly over into Asia,

promising me that God would be my guide in the expedition, and give me the empire of the Persians. Wherefore, seeing this sacred personage, and knowing him to be the same that appeared to me in my own country, I feel assured that this present war is under the direction of the Almighty, and that he will conduct it to a happy issue." Having thus said, Alexander kindly embraced the high priest, went with him into Jerusalem, and offered sacrifices in the temple.* It was on this occasion, that Jaddua read to him those portions of the book of Daniel, in which it was predicted that the Persian empire should be overthrown by a Grecian king. By these, Alexander was still farther assured that he should succeed in his conflict with Persia; and at his departure, he encouraged the Jews to ask any favor of him which they desired. Whereupon they requested that they might

* I give this story as related by Josephus, Antiq. Book XI. Chap. 8. I know not why its truth should be called in question; and if true, here was, certainly, a very remarkable interposition of Providence in behalf of the church.

enjoy the freedom of their country, their laws, and religion, and be exempted every seventh year, from paying tribute; because in that year, according to their law, they neither sowed nor reaped. This request Alexander very readily granted, and treated them ever afterwards with distinguished favor.

The Samaritans, seeing how kindly the Jews had been treated, immediately preferred a request to the king that he would honor their city and temple with his presence, and exempt them also from paying tribute every seventh year. Alexander did not absolutely deny them, but deferred the consideration of their case until his return from Egypt: At this, the Samaritans were much incensed, and to show their resentment, they rose against one of the friends of Alexander, whom he had made governor of Syria and Palestine, set fire to his house, and burned him to death. When Alexander returned, he took exemplary vengeance upon these murderers, and upon the Samaritans generally. Some he put to death; some he exiled into Egypt; and the remainder

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he drove from Samaria to Shechem, where they builded a city, and where their descendants still reside. Their former city he settled with Macedonians; their territory he gave to the Jews.

Alexander's expedition into Egypt was one of mingled glory and shame. He had no difficulty in the subjugation of Egypt. Indeed, it could hardly be called a subjugation. So tired were the Egyptians of Persian rule, that they submitted to him of their own accord, and even ran to him as to a deliverer. In establishing his authority over Egypt, he hardly needed to strike a blow.

But Alexander was not satisfied with the possession of Egypt. He must be deified and worshiped there. So he projected a journey from Memphis to the temple of Ammon, situated in the desert, two hundred and fifty miles off, and bribed the priests to declare him a son of the god. This notion of being a sort of demi-god, like Bacchus and Hercules, seems to have possessed him ever after, and was in fact the occasion of his ruin. It was this

which led him, like Hercules, foolishly to invade India, and more foolishly to drink himself to death, in imitation of Bacchus.

On his way to the temple of Ammon, Alexander observed a place, over against the island of Pharos, on the sea coast, which he thought a favorable situation for a new city; and there he caused to be built Alexandria. He named it for himself, and made it the future capital of Egypt. For long ages, Alexandria was not only the grand depot of European commerce, but the principal seat of learning in the world. At present, it is a poor place, remarkable, chiefly, for the ruins of what it once was.

When Alexander had settled the government of Egypt, and disposed of all things according to his will, he set out for the East, in pursuit of Darius. The two armies, with their leaders, came together beyond the Tigris, not far from the site of ancient Nineveh. The Persians numbered not less than a million, while the whole force of Alexander did not exceed fifty thousand. Yet he had no hesitation in hazarding battle, and that too on an

open plain, which gave great advantage to the Persians. The fortune of the day was soon decided; Darius was routed and defeated, and the whole Persian empire, to the utmost extent in which it was possessed by Cyrus, or by any of his successors, fell into the hands of Alexander. And herein was accomplished what had long before been predicted by Daniel: "A he-goat came from the West, on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns, and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him, and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand." (Dan. 8: 5—7).

Having lost the battle, Darius fled into Media, and afterwards into Bactria, endeavoring in vain to raise another army; but his own followers, becoming weary at length of



his fallen fortunes, took his life. Alexander shed many tears over his dead body; wrapped it in his own cloak, and sent it to Shushan, to be buried among the kings of Persia. The expenses of the funeral he bore himself; nor did he cease to pursue the traitors who murdered Darius, until they were destroyed.

I have no occasion to speak farther of the rapid marches and flying conquests of Alexander in the East. He soon made himself master of all those wild and mountainous regions lying North and East of Persia; penetrated far into India, and returned by a circuitous route to Babylon. He seemed rather to fly than to march, and wherever he came, the terrified nations bowed down before him, and owned him as their lord. So remarkably did he answer, in this respect, to Daniel's prophetic symbols of him;—a he-goat coming from the West, and *not touching the ground*; a leopard, having on its back the wings of a fowl, with which *to fly and take the prey.*" (Dan. 7: 5; 8: 5.)

While Alexander lay at Babylon, he was



constantly projecting great designs for the future. One of his plans was, to prepare a fleet, with which to circumnavigate the African continent, and return into Greece by the pillars of Hercules. Another was, to rebuild the ruined tower of Belus, and the city of Babylon, and restore both to more than their ancient splendor. At the same time, he was intent upon his pleasures, which he carried to the most ruinous excess. He often spent whole days and nights in drunkenness and debauchery, drinking quarts, and (if the accounts are to be credited), gallons at a sitting; by which means he brought on a fever which in a few days put an end to his life. He feared not to meet the East in arms; but its vices and luxuries destroyed him. His death occurred in the year before Christ 323, when he had reigned only twelve years and a half.

His success in war, during this period, was beyond all example. He was often extravagant in his plans, and rash almost to madness in their execution; yet none of them failed. He seems to have been raised up in providence

to chastise and destroy the guilty nations, and most remarkably did he fulfill his destiny. He subjected all to his sway, from the Adriatic sea to the Ganges, and from the unknown regions of the North to the Indian ocean.

After the death of Alexander, there was great confusion among his followers about the succession. At length the government was settled upon his idiot brother, and his infant son. But these reigned only in name, and for a little while. The government, (what of government there was), was really in the hands of Alexander's great military leaders; and these were constantly quarreling and fighting among themselves. During these commotions, which lasted more than twenty years, the Jews were variously and often painfully affected. In the fourth year after the decease of Alexander, Jaddua their high priest died, and was succeeded in office by Onias his son. The same year, Jerusalem was besieged by Ptolemy Soter, who had been constituted governor of Egypt. The place was strongly fortified, and might have held

out for a long time ; but Ptolemy, knowing the strictness with which the Jews observed their Sabbath, made choice of this day in which to attack them, and to storm their city. Having got possession of Jerusalem, he was at first inclined to treat the inhabitants with rigor. He broke down their walls, and removed not less than a hundred thousand of them to the new city of Alexandria in Egypt. Hence, the multitude of Jews which are known to have dwelt at Alexandria, down to the times of our Saviour and his Apostles. In a little time, the heart of Ptolemy began to relent. He came to think better of the Jews, restored to them their privileges, and treated them with distinguished favor. He was not permitted; however, to retain permanent possession of their country. It fell, after a time, under the power of Antigonus, another of Alexander's generals; on which occasion, many of the Jews voluntarily left the land of their fathers, and went into Egypt. At length Ptolemy succeeded in recovering the provinces

of Syria and Palestine, and in attaching them permanently to his dominions.

After a long period of confusion and bloodshed, the empire of Alexander was finally divided into four parts, and four of his more distinguished followers assumed the title of Kings, and reigned over them. Ptolemy had Egypt, Arabia, Cœlo-Syria, and Palestine; Cassander had Macedon and Greece; Lysimachus had Thrace, Bythinia, and some other provinces in Northwestern Asia; and Seleucus had all the rest. And herein was fulfilled, again, several of Daniel's most remarkable predictions. When "the he-goat had waxed very great, and was strong, the notable horn between his eyes was broken, and for it came up *four notable horns* toward the four winds of heaven." This rough goat, we are expressly told, denotes "the King of Grecia; and the great horn between his eyes the first King. Now that being broken, *four Kingdoms* shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power." (Dan. 8: 8, 21, 22.) We have the same events more literally predicted in another place. "A



mighty King shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he shall stand up, his Kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided towards the four winds of heaven ; but *not to his posterity* nor according to the dominion with which he ruled." (Dan. 11 : 3, 4.) It is remarkable that not one of those, who divided among themselves the empire of Alexander, was of his posterity or kindred. They were all of them of other blood. So literally, wonderfully have these predictions of Daniel been fulfilled.

It was just at this time that Onias, the high priest of the Jews, died and was succeeded in office by his son Simon, who on account of his excellent character, and his eminent abilities and holiness, is called *Simon the Just*. His praises are devoutly sung by the Son of Sirach. He is said to have fortified Jerusalem and the temple, and to have discharged all the duties of his high office in the most becoming and acceptable manner. (Ecc. chap. 50.) There are some parts of the Old Testament—some



*fragments* of it, at least—which could not have been inserted by Ezra. They relate to events which took place after his death.\* The Jews have a tradition (which is very probable) that these parts were inserted by Simon the Just. If so, to him belongs the honor of putting the last finishing touch to the canon of the Old Testament. He continued in office only nine years, when he died, and was succeeded by his brother Eleazer.

Of the territories assigned to the four Kings above mentioned, those of Seleucus were much the largest, extending from India to the Mediterranean sea. He built many cities, the principal of which were Antioch, situated on the Orontes, in upper Syria, about twenty miles from the Mediterranean; and Seleucia, on the Tigris, near the site of the modern Bagdad. Antioch soon became, and long continued, the most distinguished city of Western Asia. It was here that the Syrian Kings had

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\* The genealogies of Zerubbabel, and of Jeshua, are carried down to the times of Alexander the great. See 1 Chron. 3: 19—24. Neh. 12: 10, 22.

their seat of empire ; here the Roman governors afterwards resided ; here the followers of Jesus were first called Christians ; and here for many centuries, was the see of the chief Patriarch of the Asian churches.

Upon the building of Seleucia, ancient Babylon became almost entirely deserted. The inhabitants flocked to the new city, which was sometimes called New Babylon. Indeed, from this time, whenever Babylon is spoken of as an inhabited city, whether in sacred or secular history, New Babylon, and not the Old, is intended.

Seleucus was a firm friend and patron of the Jews. He admitted them into all his cities, and granted them equal privileges with the Greeks and Macedonians. It was through his influence, that so many of the Jews settled in Antioch, and in the other cities of Western Asia.

The Jews had always been numerous in the East, from the time of the captivity. Notwithstanding all the encouragement given them by the Persian kings, not half of them

ever returned into Palestine. They were of great service to Seleucus in his wars, and he bestowed upon them all the privileges which they could reasonably desire.

The Jews of Palestine were now under the government of Ptolemy, king of Egypt; and he was equally favorable to them in his dominions, as Seleucus was in his. They had special privileges granted them at Alexandria, and constituted an important part of the population of that great city.

In the year 283 before Christ, Ptolemy Soter died, at the advanced age of eighty-four; having governed Egypt, from the death of Alexander, forty years. He was the wisest and best of all the Ptolemies, and left an example of prudence, justice, and clemency, which none of his successors cared to follow. Before his death, he had admitted his son, Ptolemy Philadelphus, to be a partner of his throne, and thereby established the succession.

The famous Alexandrian library was commenced by Ptolemy Soter. It was greatly increased by Ptolemy Philadelphus, and those who

came after him, until it numbered at length, 700,000 volumes. A part of this library was destroyed in the time of Julius Cæsar. The other part was burned by the command of the caliph Omar, A. D. 642. His reply to his general, who inquired of him what should be done with the books, was as follows: "If their contents agree with the Koran, we have no need of them. If they disagree, we cannot endure them. Therefore, let them be burned." So those inestimable treasures of ancient learning and wisdom were distributed for fuel to the public baths, and sufficed to heat all the baths of the city for the space of six months.

It was during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, that the Greek version of the Old Testament, commonly called the Septuagint, was commenced at Alexandria. The ancient Jewish legends respecting this version,—such as that Ptolemy sent to Jerusalem for a copy of the sacred writings, and for six learned scribes from each of the twelve tribes of Israel (making seventy-two in all) to translate

them ; that these were secluded in distinct cells on the isle of Pharos, till each had prepared a separate version ; that on comparing these versions, they were found to agree word for word with each other ;—these and other like stories, which were copied from the Jews by the early Christian Fathers, and on account of which the version has ever since been called *the Septuagint*, —are deservedly rejected by the learned of the present day. This version, evidently, was not all made at once. The Pentateuch may have been translated, for the use of the synagogues, as early as the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus. It was then much needed, because the Hebrew language was no longer understood, at least by the common people. The rest of the Old Testament seems not to have been translated, until the times of Antiochus Epiphanes, when the Jews were forbidden to read the law in their synagogues, and commenced reading the other Scriptures.

It is moreover certain that this translation was not all made by the same hand. The differences in the style and character of the



translations—the accuracy with which some of the books are translated, and the carelessness and inaccuracy which appear in others, are full proof of this.

On the whole, there can be no reasonable doubt, that a translation of the Old Testament into Greek was commenced at Alexandria, as early as the days of Ptolemy Philadelphus, and that, in a course of years, it was completed. There can be no doubt that this version was used in the synagogues of Alexandria, where, as I said, it was now needed, and that a copy of it was deposited in the king's great library. There is no doubt that this version came into general use among the Jews wherever the Greek language was spoken; that it was used in Palestine in the days of our Saviour, and was frequently quoted by him and the Apostles. As to the origin of this celebrated version, it was probably made by learned Alexandrian Jews in Egypt, and from some one of the copies which were there. Why should the king send to Jerusalem for a copy, when there were,

doubtless, fifty copies in Alexandria? Or why should he send to Jerusalem for translators, when the scribes at Alexandria were much better qualified for the work, than any he could get from the holy land? The Greek tongue was vernacular at Alexandria; whereas it had scarcely begun to be spoken, at this time, in Jerusalem. There were other translations of the Old Testament into Greek, as those of Aquila, of Theodotion, and Symmachus; but these were made at a later period, and were never regarded as of equal authority and sacredness with the Septuagint.

## CHAPTER V.

*The kings of Syria and Egypt. The Persecutions and Oppressions of Antiochus Epiphanes.*

IN my last I spoke of Alexander's empire as divided among four of his great generals, who governed the different parts of it as kings. The last of these which survived was Seleucus. He reigned over all the East, and was intent on extending his empire into the West. While on his way to take possession of Macedon, he was treacherously murdered by one of his followers. He was succeeded in the government by his son Antiochus, commonly called Antiochus Soter.

Ptolemy Philadelphus was still the sovereign of Palestine and Egypt. In the year 274 before Christ, he sent an embassy to the Romans, and the Romans, the next year, sent

ambassadors to him. This is the first mention we have of the Romans, as concerning themselves with the affairs of the East.

Ptolemy, that he might advance the riches of his kingdom, contrived to divert the trade of the East from its accustomed channels, and to bring nearly the whole of it to Alexandria. For this purpose, he established a port, and built a city, on the Western shore of the Red Sea, almost down to the straits of Babelmandel, from which he constructed a road across the desert to the Nile. He built houses of entertainment on the way, and furnished them with water, by a channel from the river. In this way, the commerce of the East, which in all previous ages had gone through Tyre, was now brought directly to the Nile, down which it floated to the great city of Alexandria. And in this channel, the trade between Asia and Europe continued to flow, for the next seventeen hundred years,—until a better route was discovered by the cape of Good Hope.

We have now arrived at the age of the

Mishnical Doctors (so called from their love of tradition) among the Jews. The first of these was Antigonus Socho, who was president of the Sanhedrim and teacher of the law at Jerusalem. Among his scholars was a Jew, by the name of Sadoc. Having heard his master often insist that the God of Israel should not be served from mere selfish motives, such as the love of reward and the fear of punishment, Sadoc came at last to believe that there are no rewards or punishments beyond the grave, or in other words, that *there is no future life*. He had many followers who, deriving their name from him, were called Sadducees. They differed from the other Jews, not only in respect to the doctrine of immortality, but in discarding all tradition, and receiving only the five books of Moses. This semi-infidel sect, I hardly need say, was in existence, and flourishing in the times of our Saviour.\*

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\* I have given what seems to me the most probable account of the name and origin of the Sadducees. Some suppose them to have originated at a later period.



In the year 261 before Christ, Antiochus Soter died, and was succeeded by his son, Antiochus Theos. To this king Berosus, the famous Babylonish historian, dedicates his history. He was a priest of Belus, and lived at Babylon in the days of Alexander. He afterwards resided at Cos, and at Athens, where he wrote his history in the Greek language. The entire work is not extant, but we have fragments of it in Josephus and Eusebius, which shed light on many passages of the Old Testament. At the same time lived also Manetho, the historian of Egypt. He too had been a priest in his own country. His history, of which only some extracts remain, was written in Greek, and dedicated to Ptolemy Philadelphus.

Between Antiochus Theos and Ptolemy Philadelphus there were long and bloody wars. While the former was engaged in contending with the latter, his Eastern provinces—nearly all beyond the Tigris—revolted from him, and set up an independent government. Thus a

foundation was laid for what was afterwards the Parthian empire.

Antiochus and Ptolemy died within a year of each other. The former was succeeded by his son Seleucus Callinicus, and the latter by his son Ptolemy Euergetes. These two princes, like their fathers, were almost continually engaged in war, in which Ptolemy had greatly the advantage of his rival. He carried the war far into the East, and might have entirely overthrown the empire of Seleucus, had he not been summoned home to suppress a revolt in Egypt. On his return from this expedition, he brought back a vast amount of treasure, and with it no less than two thousand five hundred Egyptian idols, which in former times had been carried away. All these he restored to the temples in Egypt; on which account he received the name *Euergetes*, that is *Benefactor*, from the priests. It is said also that, on his return, he visited Jerusalem, and offered sacrifices to the God of Israel, in token of his gratitude for the victories he had gained over the king of Syria.

Seleucus Callinicus was one of the most unfortunate of the Syrian kings. He was constantly at war, and almost as constantly defeated. The very elements seemed often to conspire against him. While his empire was gradually diminishing in the West, the new Parthian kingdom was becoming strong in the East,—too strong to be subverted either by him or his successors. In his wars with the Parthians, he was at length taken prisoner, and died in captivity among them.

Meanwhile, Ptolemy Euergetes was enjoying peace and prosperity in Egypt. Like his father and grandfather, he was the patron and promoter of learning. He gathered around him learned men, and was making continual additions to the royal library of Alexandria. In the twenty-first year of his reign, he had a quarrel with the high priest at Jerusalem, growing out of the failure of the latter to pay the customary tribute.

I have said already, that the successor of Simon the Just in the high priest's office was his brother Eleazer. To him succeeded Ma-

nasseh, a son of Jaddua, and cousin of Simon the Just. The successor of Manasseh, who was now in office, was Onias II., a son of Simon the Just. But he seems to have been the very opposite of his father, in those good qualities which his office required. He was of a sluggish temper, and of a mean, sordid, avaricious spirit. As he advanced in years, his covetousness increased upon him, till at length he withheld the twenty talents, which was required to be paid, annually, to the king of Egypt. Upon this, Ptolemy sent an officer to Jerusalem to demand the money, threatening, in case of refusal, to invade Judea with an army, and dispossess the Jews of their country. In this emergency they were delivered through the prudence, the energy, and perseverance of a young kinsman of the high priest, whose name was Joseph. He collected the tribute which had been kept back, hastened with it into Egypt, made a satisfactory apology to the king, and was received into favor with him, as he deserved.

I have before stated, that the unfortunate

Seleucus Callinicus died a prisoner among the Parthians. He was succeeded by his eldest son Seleucus, who took the name of *Ceraunus*, or the *Thunderer*. But never was such a title less deserved. He was a very weak prince, both in mind, in body, and estate, and accomplished nothing worthy of notice. Indeed, he reigned only two years, when two of his generals conspired against him, and cut him off. He was succeeded by his younger brother, Antiochus, known in history as Antiochus the Great.

The following year, (before Christ 221) Ptolemy Euergetes died, after a prosperous reign of twenty-five years. He was succeeded by his profligate and wicked son, Ptolemy Philopator. He murdered his mother and brother, and afterwards his wife and sister. His reign was characterized throughout by acts of barbarity, brutality, and wickedness. There were long wars between him and Antiochus, in which the territory of the Jews, lying as it did between the two, suffered repeatedly and severely. In the year 218 before Christ,



the provinces of Coelo-Syria and Palestine fell into the hands of Antiochus. But the next year, Antiochus having been defeated at the battle of Raphia, these provinces reverted to Egypt. It was at this time, that Ptolemy Philopator came to Jerusalem. He took a view of the temple, gave gifts to the priests, and offered sacrifices to the God of Israel. After this, he insisted upon going into the temple—even into the holy of holies, where no one could lawfully enter except the high priest, and he only once in a year. The high-priest at this time was Simon, son of Onias II., and grandson of Simon the Just. He did what he could to dissuade the king; but the more he was opposed, the more obstinate he became, until he had pressed into the inner court of the temple. But on his attempting to proceed further, he was suddenly smitten with such a tremor, with such terror and confusion of mind, that he fainted, and was carried out of the place in a state of insensibility. Upon this, he hasted away from Jerusalem, filled

with wrath, and uttering the most terrible threats against the whole nation of the Jews.

On his return to Alexandria, he immediately commenced putting his threats in execution. He first degraded the Jews of Alexandria ; and deprived them (or such of them as would not renounce their religion) of the privileges which, from the first founding of the city, they had enjoyed. He next commanded, that all the Jews in Egypt should be brought by force to Alexandria, and shut up in the Hippodrome, intending there to expose them, for his own amusement and that of his court, to be destroyed by elephants. But when the elephants were brought forth—having been maddened for two days to prepare them for the fray—instead of falling upon the defenceless Jews, they turned their rage upon the spectators, and destroyed many of them. The king now was thoroughly frightened. He dared not carry out his threats any farther. He revoked his decrees against the Jews, restored them to their privileges, and bestowed

upon them distinguished favors. (3 Maccabees, chap. 2—5.)

Three years after this, the people of Alexandria, being tired of their oppressions, and disgusted with the abominable government under which they lived, rose in arms against it. In this rebellion the Jews of Alexandria took part, and Eusebius informs us that no less than forty thousand of them were slain.

Ptolemy Philopator reigned, in all, seventeen years. He had naturally a robust constitution, which was thoroughly worn out by his intemperance and debaucheries, and he died at the early age of thirty-seven. So true is it, that “the wicked are driven away in their wickedness,” and that “bloody and deceitful men do not live out half their days.”

His successor was Ptolemy Epiphanes, a little son only five years old. But before speaking of the events of his reign, it is necessary that we turn back, and give some account of Antiochus the great. He found the Syrian empire in a state of great weakness and confusion, curtailed on every side, and

apparently tottering to its fall. But by the energy of his government and the success of his arms, he was enabled to restore it almost to its former strength. He first established his authority in the East, and (with the exception of Parthia, Bactria, and some of the provinces of India) recovered all that had been held by his predecessors. He then passed into Western Asia, and reduced most of the revolted provinces there. He was unfortunate in his first attempt upon Palestine and Egypt, but these never had belonged to the empire of his fathers.

In the year 195 before Christ, the great Carthaginian warrior Hannibal,—having been beaten in the second Punic war, and being under the necessity of leaving Carthage,—threw himself upon the hospitality, and implored the protection and friendship of Antiochus. It was through his influence, chiefly, that Antiochus was induced to attempt the conquest of Greece, and to engage in war with the Romans. This war, though undertaken by the advice of Hannibal, was not

prosecuted according to his wise suggestions. It proved most disastrous to Antiochus. In his encounters with the Romans, whether by sea or land, he was always beaten. They drove him out of Europe, followed him into Asia, dispossessed him of all the lesser Asia, and obliged him, on settling a treaty, to bear all the expenses of the war. He lived but a little while after this. In endeavoring to raise money with which to fulfill his treaty with the Romans, he became so sacrilegious and oppressive, that his subjects rose in arms against him and slew him. He is represented as possessing, according to the standard of the age in which he lived, an amiable character. He was mild, humane, beneficent, just, and until his last unhappy war, was almost uniformly prospered in his undertakings. He died in the year 187 before Christ, and left his throne to Seleucus Philopator, his eldest son.

We return now to the affairs of Egypt. I have said that Ptolemy Epiphanes was left heir to the throne, when only five years of age. As he had neither father nor mother,



and his dominions were menaced on every side, the court of Egypt sent an embassy to the Romans, praying them to accept the guardianship of their king, and the regency of the empire, during his minority. The Romans readily consented to the proposal, and took on them the charge of the young king. Antiochus had even before this marched an army into Coelo-Syria and Palestine, and taken possession the second time, of those provinces; but now an army of Greeks was sent thither, to recover the lost provinces to Egypt. The next year Antiochus took possession of them again; so that in the space of a very few years, Jerusalem changed masters no less than four times. In these revolutions, the city and country suffered severely; for with every change, there must be a repetition of carnage and plunder.

At this time, the Jews seem to have become tired of the yoke of Egypt. They preferred the rule of the monarch of Syria. He had been less oppressive in his government over them. He had treated their brethren in the

East with distinguished favor. So that when Antiochus came to take possession of their country for the third time, they went out in long procession to meet him, and received him with gladness into the city. From this time, the provinces of Cœlo-Syria and Palestine continued in the hands of Antiochus, until the marriage of his daughter to Ptolemy Epiphanes, when they were voluntarily given back to Egypt, as part of the dowry of the young princess. This transfer took place in the twelfth year of the reign of Ptolemy, and in the year before Christ 193.

It was in the eighteenth year of Ptolemy that Antiochus died. He was succeeded, as I said before, by Seleucus Philopator, his eldest son. He was obliged, by the treaty which his father had concluded with the Romans, to pay them one thousand talents a year, for twelve years. This obligation embarrassed him, and led him to deal more hardly by his people than he would otherwise have done. He is fitly characterized in the predictions of Daniel, as "a raiser of taxes." (Dan. 12 : 20.)

In the early part of his reign, he succeeded, (but by what means is not known) in getting possession of Coelo-Syria and Palestine, which provinces his father had given back to Egypt. Under his government, the Jews were treated, for the most part, with equity and kindness. It is recorded to his honor, by the writer of the second book of the Maccabees, that the "holy city was inhabited with all peace, and the laws were kept very well, because of the godliness of the high priest, Onias III., and his hatred of wickedness ; while " Seleucus himself, out of his own revenues, bare all the cost belonging to the service of the sacrifices." (chap. 3: 1—3.) But there was at this time one Simon, the governor of the temple at Jerusalem, who had a quarrel with good Onias, and who, to injure him, made report to the king that there was an immense treasure laid up within its walls. Seleucus, being poor, and the Roman tribute pressing heavily upon him, could not resist the temptation of seizing this wealth ; and he dispatched his general in chief, Heliodorus, to carry it away. He came to Jerusalem, introduced his unwelcome mes-

sage, and notwithstanding the remonstrances of the high priest, insisted on plundering the temple. But in the midst of his sacrilege, he was met, repulsed, and stunned by a most terrific apparition. He was carried stupefied and senseless from the temple, and was only recovered in answer to the high priest's supplications. (See 2 Mac. 3 : 24—36.) Not long after this, Seleucus was murdered by this same Heliodorus, when he had reigned only twelve years. He was succeeded by his brother, Antiochus Epiphanes, in the year before Christ 175.

Ptolemy Epiphanes reigned over Egypt twenty-four years. So long as he was under tutors and governors, the affairs of the kingdom were managed with discretion. But when he had come to an age to take the government upon himself, he plunged into all the evil and disgraceful courses of his father. He seems to have been even a greater tyrant than his father,—so much so that his subjects twice rose upon him, and in the second instance, put an end to his life. He died at the age of



twenty-nine, leaving his wife Cleopatra, the daughter of Antiochus the great, and a son and successor (Ptolemy Philometor) only six years old.

Antiochus Epiphanes was one of the vilest characters, and most cruel persecutors, that ever sat upon a throne. He was no sooner established in his kingdom, than he deposed the good high priest Onias, and sold the office, for three hundred and sixty talents, to his unprincipled brother Jason. Nor did this satisfy him long; for only two years after, he sold the same office to Menelaus, a younger and still more wicked brother, for three hundred talents more. In order to pay the debt thus contracted, Menelaus was under the necessity of plundering the temple; and this caused a tumult at Jerusalem, which could not be quieted without blood.

A quarrel commenced early between Antiochus and his nephew, the young king of Egypt, respecting the provinces of Cœlo-Syria and Palestine. These properly belonged to Ptolemy, though they were now in possession



of Antiochus. Foreseeing that the Egyptians were intending to claim them, Antiochus commenced a war upon Ptolemy, in which he gained several battles, and made himself master of nearly all Egypt, except Alexandria. Indeed, either by force or by flattery, he obtained possession of the young king's person, and had him with him at his table, and in his camp.

While these things were transacting in Egypt, a report came to Jerusalem that Antiochus was dead, which caused great rejoicings among the Jews. At the same time, Jason, the deposed high priest, came to Jerusalem with an army, that he might crush Menelaus, and regain his office. Antiochus, hearing of these things in Egypt, and being greatly offended that the rumor of his death should have caused so much exultation among the Jews, resolved to wreak his vengeance upon them. His victorious army was soon before Jerusalem, the city was taken, and was given up to pillage and slaughter. Within three days, forty thousand of its inhabitants were

slain, and as many more were sold into slavery. Not content with this, Antiochus (under the guidance of the traitorous high priest, Mene-la-us) forced himself into the recesses of the temple, polluting with his presence even the holy of holies. And that he might offer the grossest insult, not only to the people but to the God of Israel, he sacrificed a sow on the altar of burnt offering, and making broth of a portion of its flesh, sprinkled with it the holy place. He next proceeded to plunder the temple of its golden vessels to the value of eighteen hundred talents, and made off with his booty and his army to Antioch.

The Alexandrians, finding that Ptolemy Philometor was not likely to protect them against the intrusions of Antiochus, took a younger brother of his (known in history as Ptolemy Physcon) and placed him on the throne. When Antiochus heard of this, he resolved upon a second expedition into Egypt, professedly to restore Philometor, but really to subject the whole kingdom to himself. When the Egyptians heard of his intentions, they sent, at once, an

embassy to the Romans, praying them to interpose, to stay the ravages of Antiochus, and restore peace to their distracted country. The Romans gladly availed themselves of the opportunity to extend their influence and power, and their ambassadors (at the head of whom was Caius Popilius) arrived in Egypt, just as Antiochus was commencing, for the last time, to lay siege to Alexandria. Seeing Popilius coming, Antiochus, (who had known him at Rome) put forth his hand to embrace him, as an old acquaintance and friend. But Popilius withdrew his hand, telling him that public interests must take the precedence of private friendships. He immediately handed him the decree of the Senate, requiring him to stay all further proceedings against Egypt, and withdraw his army from the country. Antiochus hesitated, and asked time for consideration. But Popilius replied, that the decision must be made upon the spot; and then drawing a circle around him in the sand, forbade him to step out of it, until he had settled the question one way or the other. The proud

spirit of Antiochus was compelled to yield. He dared not risk a quarrel with the Romans. He promised to raise the siege of Alexandria, and to withdraw his forces out of Egypt.

But he went away in great wrath, and because he could not punish the Egyptians, he determined to vent his spite upon Jerusalem. Accordingly, as he passed on with his army through Palestine to Antioch, he sent Appollonius, one of his generals, to invest, capture, and destroy that devoted city.

It was just two years after the taking of the city by Antiochus, that Appollonius arrived before it with his army. He concealed his purpose a few days, until the Sabbath, when, falling upon the unsuspecting and defenceless people, he slew all the men he could find, and took the women and children to sell them into slavery. After this, he plundered the city, set fire to it in several places, demolished the houses, brake down the walls, and with the ruins which had accumulated built a strong tower, high enough to overlook and command the temple. Here he placed a garrison, and



furnished it with abundant provisions, that the soldiers might guard the temple, and cut off all who came there to worship. From this time the temple was entirely deserted, the daily sacrifices were omitted; and none went into it to pay their devotions, for the space of three years and a half.

Nor was this all the evil which now befell the miserable Jews. Upon his return to his capital, Antiochus published what may be called, in modern phrase, an act of uniformity. He commanded all people throughout his dominions, to renounce their former rites and usages, and conform to the religion of the king. And that his decree might be faithfully executed, he sent deputies into all the towns and villages of the empire to see to the observance of it, and to instruct the people in the new religion to which they were required to conform. This decree, to be sure, was couched in general terms, but then it was known to be designed more especially for the Jews. The king's intention was, either to convert them to his religion, or to cut them all off.



The deputy who was sent for this purpose into Judea, was resolved to execute it thoroughly. He suppressed all Jewish festivals and observances, forbade the practice of circumcision, searched out and destroyed the books of the law, and having defiled the temple in every part, consecrated it to Jupiter Olympus. He set up an image of Jupiter in the inner court of the temple, and built an altar before it, on which many sacrifices were offered.

A portion of the Jews, and *all* the Samaritans, at this time apostatized from their religion. For it was the custom of the Samaritans, when the Jews were in prosperity, to claim connection and favor with them; but when the Jews were persecuted, they would disclaim all such connection, hoping in this way to escape. There were those among the Jews however, and they were not few—in the deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth—who would not bow the knee to Baal. Such were two pious mothers at Jerusalem, who, having lately circumcised each of

them her infant, were condemned to be thrown from the top of the wall, with their murdered children hanging about their necks. Such was Salamona, a noble Jewish mother, who, with her seven sons, underwent a most terrible death, rather than forsake the God of Israel. (See 2 Mac. chap. 6 : 7.)

It was just at this awful crisis, when the people of God and the true religion seemed likely to be swallowed up together, that the standard of revolt was raised by Matthias and his valiant sons, and the hour of Judah's deliverance came. But this brings me to the history of the Maccabees, of which I shall speak in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER VI.

*Death of Antiochus Epiphanes. The Maccabees. Fulfillment of Daniel, chap. XI.*

IN the last chapter, we brought down the history of the Jews to the time of their deepest depression and persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes, when their city was deserted, their temple profaned, the holy rites of their religion prohibited, and many of the pious in Israel had been persecuted unto death. As the deputies of Antiochus "passed through all quarters," searching out the scattered people, and compelling them to do sacrifice to their gods, they found at Modin a venerable priest, named Matthias, a descendant of Asmonæus, from whom the family are sometimes called Asmonæans. Matthias had seven sons, all valiant men, who, like him, were zealous for the law of their God. The deputy at

Modin undertook, first of all, to persuade Matthias to lay aside his scruples, and conform to the religion of the king; urging the influence of his example upon others. But Matthias declared with a loud voice, that no consideration whatever should induce him, or any of his family, to act contrary to the law of their God; and seeing, at that instant, a recreant Jew presenting himself before the heathen altar, and preparing to offer sacrifice upon it, he ran upon him, and in the heat of his zeal slew him. He next fell upon the king's deputy, and by the help of his sons slew him, and all who attended him.

The sword of revolt was now fairly drawn, and the scabbard thrown away. Matthias and his sons retired into the mountains, where they were soon followed by many others. Observing that their enemies had generally taken advantage of the Sabbath to attack and destroy them, this noble band of fugitives agreed among themselves, that while they would endeavor to keep the Sabbath according to the commandment, they would have no

scruple, if assaulted, in defending themselves on that holy day.

Having got together enough followers to constitute a little army, Matthias and his sons came out of their fastnesses, and went round the cities of Judah, pulling down heathen altars, circumcising the children, and destroying apostates and persecutors, wherever they could be found. And having found copies of the law, they set up the worship of the synagogue, as it was before. But Matthias being very aged, and unable to endure this kind of life, expired before the end of the year. As he lay dying, he called his sons around him, and having appointed Judas to be their captain, and Simon their chief counselor, he adjured them to stand up valiantly for the law of their God, and to fight his battles against their persecutors. Thus saying, he gave up the ghost, and was buried in the sepulchre of his fathers, amid the lamentations of the faithful in Israel.

As soon as the funeral solemnities were over, Judas, with his little army, took the



field. Upon his standard was written this inspiriting motto : *Mi Camoka Baelim Jehovah*, " Who is like unto thee among the gods, Jehovah ?" (Ex. 15 : 11.) The first letters of these four Hebrew words, *Mem*, *Caph*, *Beth*, *Yod*, being conjoined into one word, make *Macabi*. Hence, those who fought under this sacred standard were called Maccabees ; and Judas, their captain, was called by way of eminence Judas Maccabæus.

Antiochus was at this time celebrating games at Antioch, after the manner of the Greeks and Romans ; but Judas was playing another sort of game in Palestine. He was marching from place to place, encouraging and delivering the faithful people of God, cutting off idolaters and apostates, and destroying (so far as possible) every vestige of the new religion. And not only so, he was fortifying the towns, establishing garrisons, and making himself strong and powerful in the land. Apollonius, the king's lieutenant, hearing of his successes, marched against him with a great army ; but Judas vanquished him and his

forces in battle, and took much spoil. He took, among other things, the sword of Apollonius, which he himself carried ever afterwards. Another of Antiochus' generals then took the field against Judas, followed by a still more numerous army ; but they met the same fate as the first. Judas fell upon them, slew great multitudes, and scattered the remnant to the winds.

When Antiochus heard of these disasters in Palestine, he was excited to the intensest indignation. He immediately set about collecting a vast army, with which to destroy the whole nation of the Jews, and blot out the remembrance of them from the earth. But in the language of the prophet, " tidings from the North and from the East troubled him." In the North, the king of Armenia had revolted ; and in the East, his tribute could not be collected, so that funds for the support of his army were wanting. In this emergency, the king concluded to divide his army into two parts. With the one part, he would go in person into Armenia and Persia ; while the

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other part, under Lysias, his chief captain, was to defeat and exterminate the Jews.

Lysias was not slow in entering upon his bloody commission. Urged on by the king's commandment, he set forward an army of forty thousand foot and seven thousand horse, under the direction of Nicanor, one of his lieutenants, intending himself soon to follow, if it should be found necessary. These all encamped at Emmaus, near Jerusalem, attended by thousands of Syrian and Phenician merchants, who had come together for the purchase of captives, which they supposed would of course, be taken in the war.

Judas, although he could not muster more than six thousand men, was resolved to take the field, and fight till he died, in the service of God and his country. But first of all, he assembled his forces at Mizpah, and kept a day of solemn fasting and prayer, imploring direction and strength from heaven. Then he made proclamation, according to the law, that all those who that year had built houses, or betrothed wives, or planted vineyards, or

were dismayed and fearful, might depart. In consequence of this, his army of six thousand was reduced to three thousand. Still, this noble hearted man was not at all discouraged. He divided his little company into four parts, under the direction of his brothers and himself, and solemnly waited the movements of the enemy, and the providential direction and interposition of God. In these circumstances, he learned that a detachment of the enemy, under Gorgias, had left their camp in the night, and were marching round secretly to attack him in his rear. Whereupon he made immediately for the deserted camp, took it, plundered it, and set it on fire. The rest of the Syrian army, under Nicanor, seeing the camp of Gorgias on fire, and supposing that his forces had been captured and destroyed, fled at once in great terror, leaving their tents also to be taken by the Jews. By this time Gorgias, having sought in vain for Judas, was marching back to his own place ; but finding his camp destroyed, and the rest of the Syrian army fled, he fled also in great amazement,

declaring that it was vain to fight against the God of Israel. The result of the expedition was, that Judas and his company took the whole Syrian camp, with a vast amount of spoil and treasure, slew nine thousand of the enemy on the field, dispersed the rest, and sold most of the merchants into captivity to the Jews, who had assembled there to make captives of them. The following Sabbath was kept by the Jews with great rejoicing, giving praise and thanksgiving to God for their wonderful deliverance.

Greatly strengthened by this victory, and resolved to make the most of it in his power, Judas immediately led his forces across the Jordan, to attack another of Antiochus' generals who was stationed there. Here he gained another battle, and left twenty thousand of the enemy dead upon the field.

By this time Lysias, who had not yet tried his fortune in Judea, was thoroughly aroused. As speedily as possible, he mustered an army of sixty thousand foot and five thousand horse, and putting himself at the head of it, marched

into the land of Israel. He pitched his camp at Bethsura, a fortified town lying south of Jerusalem, near the borders of Idumea. Here Judas met him, with only ten thousand men, vanquished him in battle, slew five thousand of his soldiers, and put the rest to flight.

Being now fairly master of the country, Judas proposed to his followers that they should go up to Jerusalem, purify the temple, and consecrate it anew to the service of the Lord. On coming to the holy city, they found every thing as they expected, in a most lamentable condition. The walls were thrown down, the sanctuary desolate, the altar profaned, the gates of the temple consumed, the priests' chambers demolished, and the courts about the temple grown over with weeds and shrubs. But Judas and his company though they could not refrain their tears, were not men to be discouraged. They immediately set about repairing the desolations, and cleansing the sanctuary. They pulled down the heathen altars, removed and destroyed the idols, replaced the sacred vessels which Antiochus had

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carried away, rebuilt the altar of the Lord, and hung up a new vail between the holy and most holy place. And when every thing had been set in order, they appointed a day on which the temple and its furniture should be consecrated anew. The dedication took place on the 25th day of the ninth Jewish month, Cisleu, about the time of the winter solstice, just three years and a half after the city and temple had been profaned and desolated by Apollonius. The solemnity continued for eight successive days, and an annual festival in commemoration of it was long observed among the Jews. It was the feast of *the dedication* which, on one occasion at least, our Saviour honored with his presence. (John 10: 22.) It was the only one of the great annual festivals which occurred in the winter.

When the Jews had recovered and purified the temple, and instituted anew the public worship of God, there was but another thing which they had occasion to desire ; and this was the destruction of the tower which Apollonius had built and garrisoned with soldiers, to

prevent the people from going up to the temple to worship. This was still in the hands of the enemy ; nor was Judas able, either by siege or assault, to bring them to surrender. Wherefore he built walls and towers round about the temple, and placed soldiers in them, that they might defend the holy places, and protect the priests and pious worshipers.

During all this time Antiochus was in the East, endeavoring to collect his tribute, and to enrich himself from the plunder of temples, and the oppression of his people. When he heard of the exploits of Judas, and of the defeat of his armies in Palestine, he was terribly enraged. The furnace of his wrath was kindled seven-fold hotter than ever before. He set out with the utmost speed on his return, threatening as he hurried on, that he would make Jerusalem a sepulchre for the whole Jewish nation, and bury them to a man. But while thus "breathing out threatenings and slaughter," the judgments of insulted heaven overtook him. He was suddenly smitten with an incurable disease of the

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bowels, and with the most tormenting anguish, which no remedies could remove or abate. Still, he would not stop in his career, but commanded his charioteer to drive on, that he might the sooner be in a situation to wreak his vengeance on the Jews. In a little time, his chariot was upset, and he was so sorely injured, and so terribly diseased, that he was constrained to stop. And here he became, both to himself and to all around him, a monument of the avenging judgment of God. His sufferings, both of body and mind, were beyond all expression. His lower extremities became putrid and rotten, filled with loathsome vermin, and emitting a stench unendurable, not only to others, but to himself. At the same time, his imagination was haunted with horrid spectres and apparitions, which were continually reproaching him, and stirring up his conscience to the keenest remorse. He was brought, at length, to confess, that the hand of an offended God was upon him for what he had done against his holy temple at Jerusalem, and against the lives of his faithful servants.



He deeply lamented his cruel persecutions, and promised, should his life be spared, to do what he could to make reparation. But his repentance came too late. God would not hear him. And so, after languishing a while in these unutterable torments, he went to his account in the other world, having reigned over the Syrian empire eleven years.

Our history, from the death of Alexander the Great, has been chiefly confined to Syria and Egypt; because the other two kingdoms into which Alexander's empire was divided, became early (to a great extent) merged in these; and because with these were connected, more or less, the destinies and interests of God's covenant people. The Jews, during all this period, though considerably dispersed over the ancient world, had their residence, chiefly, in three or four places; such as Babylonia and Antioch, subject to the kings of Syria; Alexandria, which was in Egypt, and Palestine, which lay between the two, and was subject alternately to the one or the other.

The kings of Syria and Egypt, being thus



intimately connected with the church of God, we might naturally expect would be noticed in the language of prophecy ; and so, by universal consent, we find them. There is not a more remarkable prophecy in all the Bible—so remarkable, that infidels have often affirmed it must have been written subsequent to the events referred to—than that relating to the kings of the North and the South, or (which is the same) of Syria and Egypt, recorded in the eleventh chapter of Daniel. Before proceeding farther with our history, let us pause a little, and compare these predictions with the facts, as these have been detailed.

The vision, of which the 11th chapter of Daniel forms a part, was seen in the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia ; some four hundred years previous to the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. The revealing angel commences with saying : “ There shall yet stand up three kings in Persia ; and the fourth shall be richer than they all ; and by his strength, he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia,” (v. 2.) The three Persian kings here predicted,

were Cambyses, Smerdis, and Darius Hystaspes. The fourth, who was to be richer than they all, and who was to stir up all against the realm of Grecia, was Xerxes the Great. A memorable prediction this of his most unfortunate expedition into Greece.

The mighty king who was to stand up after him (as predicted in the third verse,) and who should rule with great dominion, was Alexander the Great. The breaking up and dividing of his kingdom unto the four winds, but not to his posterity, (v. 4,) denotes, as I have before remarked, the sudden death of Alexander, and the division of his empire to his four great generals, Seleucus, Ptolemy, Lysimachus, and Cassander.

The king of the South (v. 5,) who shall be strong, is Ptolemy Soter, the first of the name who reigned in Egypt. The one of his (Alexander's) princes, who "shall be strong above him, and have a great dominion," is Seleucus Nicator, the first of a long succession of Syrian kings, whose dominions far exceeded those of Ptolemy. The kings of the North

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and the South, through the remainder of the chapter, denote the successive kings of Syria and Egypt; the former country lying North of Palestine, the latter South of it.

“And in the end of the years,”—in process of time, not immediately—“they”—the kings of the North and South—“shall join themselves together: For the king’s daughter of the South shall come to the king of the North to make an agreement,” (v. 6.) After long wars between Syria and Egypt, Ptolemy Philadelphus gave his daughter Berenice in marriage to Antiochus Theos, in hope of putting an end to the contests between the two countries. “But she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall *he* stand, nor his arm; but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times,” (v. 6.) When Ptolemy Philadelphus was dead—and his death occurred very soon—Antiochus put away Berenice, and took again his former wife, Laodice, who poisoned her husband, and caused Berenice and her child

to be put to death. Here, then, is the death of Philadelphus, who brought her, begat her, and strengthened her; the death of her husband, who received her; her own death, and the death of her son, who was the intended heir of the crown of Syria.

“But out of the branch of her roots,” or from the same root with her, “shall one stand up in his estate.” (v. 7.) The reference here is to Ptolemy Euergetes, brother of Berenice, and who, of course, sprang from the same root with her. He succeeded his father Philadelphus, or “stood up in his estate.” To avenge the death of his sister, he “came with an army, and entered into the fortress of the king of the North,” and prevailed against him. On his return into Egypt, he carried with him “their gods, their princes, and their precious vessels of silver and gold.” Jerome says that “Ptolemy brought with him out of Syria and the East 40,000 talents of silver, and 2,500 statues of the gods,” many of which were Egyptian idols which had before been carried into Syria. “And he shall continue more

years than the king of the North." (v. 8.) Ptolemy Euergetes outlived Seleucus Callinicus by several years.

"But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces." (v. 10.) These were the sons of Seleucus Callinicus, viz., Seleucus Ceraunus, and Antiochus the great. "And *one* shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through; then shall he return, and be stirred up even to his fortress." (v. 10.) The *one* here spoken of is Antiochus the great; for Ceraunus accomplished very little. Antiochus raised a mighty army for the invasion of Egypt, and penetrated as far as Pelusium. Here Ptolemy Philopator made a truce with him for a few months. At the end of the truce, Antiochus returned, and penetrated to Raphia, the fortress of the king of the South. "And the king of the South shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him; and he"—the king of the North—"shall set forth a great multitude, but the multitude shall be given into his hand," *i. e.*, into the hand of the king of the South.

“And when he hath taken away the multitude, he shall not be strengthened by it.” (v. 11, 12.) All this literally came to pass. Ptolemy defeated Antiochus at Raphia, and took and destroyed a multitude of people. Still, he was not strengthened by the victory, as might have been expected. He made peace with Antiochus on easy terms, and relapsed into his former debauched and listless course of life.

The next seven verses of the prophecy relate to the further proceedings and destiny of Antiochus the great. “After certain years, the king of the North shall return with a great army, and with much riches.” (v. 13.) Some fourteen years subsequent to his former invasion, after he had gained a series of victories in the East, Antiochus did return for the conquest of Palestine and Egypt, with a greater army than before, and with much wealth. “And in those times, many shall stand up against the king of the South.” (v. 14.) Owing to the feeble and wicked government which was now exercised in Egypt, many did rise up against it. The provinces revolted; there were insurrections in Egypt itself; the

king of Macedon entered into a league with Antiochus to divide the empire of Ptolemy between them. "Also the robbers of thy people," or among thy people, "shall exalt themselves to establish the vision." (v. 14.) The prevailing faction among the Jews broke away, at this time, from the dominion of Egypt, and placed themselves under the rule of Antiochus. "But they shall fall." (v. 14.) No sooner had Antiochus left Palestine, than a hired army of Greeks, under Scopas, was sent by Ptolemy to recover the country and Jerusalem to Egypt. But "the king of the North shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities, and the arms of the South shall not withstand; but he that cometh against him shall do according to his will, and none shall stand before him." (v. 15, 16.) On hearing of the success of Scopas, Antiochus immediately returned, recaptured Palestine, besieged Scopas in Sidon and took him, and none was able to stand against him." He also shall set his face to enter (Egypt) with the strength of his whole kingdom." (v. 17.) Antiochus now

meditates the entire subjugation of Egypt. But for some reason, he changes his plan, and enters into a pacification; for this is the proper rendering of the next two paragraphs. Instead of trying to conquer Egypt by force, he plans to get possession of it by treaty; and the main article of the treaty is next indicated. "He shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her." (v. 17.) Antiochus proposed to give his daughter Cleopatra to the young king of Egypt in marriage, promising to bestow upon her the provinces of Coelo-Syria and Palestine as her dowry. But all this he did with a corrupt design, expecting, through his daughter's influence, to make himself master of Egypt. But in this he was disappointed. "She shall not stand on his side, neither be for him." (v. 17.) After her marriage, Cleopatra preferred her husband's interests to those of her father, and refused to carry out the plan which he had devised for her.

"After this, shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many; but a prince, for his own behalf, shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease." (v. 18.) After

Antiochus had given up his designs upon Egypt, he turned his arms against the Grecian isles, and took several of them. This brought him into conflict with the Romans; and the Roman generals soon caused the reproaches which he had uttered against them to cease. They beat him at every point, drove him out of Europe, took from him the provinces of lesser Asia, and obliged him to bear all the expenses of the war. "Then shall he turn his face towards the fort of his own land; but he shall stumble, and fall, and not be found." (v. 19.) After his disgraceful treaty with the Romans, Antiochus went into his own country; and while engaged in plundering a temple in the East, was killed by the enraged populace.

"Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes," &c. (v. 20.) Antiochus was succeeded by his eldest son, Seleucus Philopator, a weak prince, who did little else but to "raise taxes" and collect tribute, to pay the enormous debt which his father had contracted to the Romans.

The remainder of this chapter, or at least

the greater part of it, is taken up in predicting the character, the exploits, the persecutions, and the end of Antiochus Epiphanes. "And in his estate shall stand up a vile person." (v. 21.) Antiochus was a younger brother of Seleucus Philopator, and succeeded him. He was, indeed, "a vile person." He took the name of *Epiphanes*, or *Illustrious*; but his subjects often called him *Epimanes*, or the *Madman*. "He shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries." (v. 21.) There were several aspirants to the throne, among whom was the lawful heir, Demetrius, son of the former king; but by flattering the court, the people, and some of the neighboring princes, Antiochus succeeded in obtaining peaceful possession of it.

The next six verses (from the 22d to the 27th inclusive) contain predictions of Antiochus' first two successful expeditions against Egypt, in which he carried the war to the very gates of Alexandria. "He shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the South, with a great army; and the king of the South shall be stirred up to battle with

a mighty army; but he shall not stand.” (v. 25.) “With the arms of a flood shall they be overflowed from before him, and shall be broken.” (v. 22.) After this, Antiochus entered into some sort of covenant or agreement with the young king of Egypt, but *hypocritically, deceitfully*, hoping in this way, to get possession of his kingdom. Hence, it is said in these verses that “after the league made with him, he shall work deceitfully.” (v. 23.) He brought over to his interests some of the household of the king of Egypt; in accordance with which it is said in the prediction; “They that feed upon a portion of his meat shall destroy him.” (v. 26.) Antiochus even got possession, in some way, of the *person* of the king of Egypt, and had him with him, as I remarked before, in his camp and at his table. This circumstance is also noted in the prediction. “They shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper.” (v. 27.) To account for the success with which Antiochus practiced his flatteries and falsehoods, it must be borne in mind, that Ptolemy Philometer, the young king of Egypt,

was his nephew, his own sister's son. After having tried, in vain, utterly to extirpate him, Antiochus undertook to cajole and flatter him, and from a pretended concern for his welfare, to get possession of him and his kingdom. When his plans had been fully concerted, Antiochus returned, in the very words of the prophet, "with great riches, to his own land." (v. 28.) And what does he do, on his way thither? "His heart shall be against the holy covenant, and he shall do exploits." (v. 28.) On his march from Egypt to Antioch, the king came to Jerusalem, as before stated, and took it. He slew thousands of the Israelites, forced himself into the recesses of the temple, sacrificed a sow on the altar of burnt offering, and otherwise defiled the holy place.

"At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the South; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter." (v. 29.) This relates to his last invasion of Egypt, which was very different in its results from either of his former expeditions. "For the ships of Chittim shall come against him; therefore shall he be grieved, and return." (v. 30.)

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These ships of Chittim are those which brought Papilius, and the other Roman Ambassadors, who compelled Antiochus (much to his grief and disappointment) to raise the siege of Alexandria, and return into his own land.

We have before seen that on his way to Antioch at this time, Antiochus despatched Apollonius to Jerusalem, to vent his rage again upon that devoted city. All this is very distinctly noticed by the prophet, "He shall have indignation against the holy covenant," and "shall have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant," i. e. with the renegade apostate Jews; "and arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate; and such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries." (v. 30, 31, 32.) All this was literally fulfilled, in the sacking of Jerusalem and the temple by Apollonius, as before stated.

It was just at this point, as we have seen, that the Maccabees raised the standard of

revolt, and the Jews were temporarily delivered. To this deliverance there is a reference in the following verses. "The people that know their God shall be *strong*, and shall *do exploits*. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many." (v. 32, 33.)

The remainder of the chapter, owing either to our imperfect history of the times, or because some other hostile personage is introduced, is not of so obvious interpretation. Yet there are passages which were strikingly fulfilled upon Antiochus. Thus, while he was meditating a more terrible infliction upon the Jews than any they had before suffered, we are told that "tidings out of the East and out of the North shall trouble him; therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. Yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him." (v. 44, 45.) These tidings related, as the history informs us, to the revolts in Armenia, and in Persia, which defeated his plan of going at once, and in person, against the Jews. While prosecuting his designs in the East, he heard of the successes of Judas Maccabæus in Palestine,



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and sat out in great wrath and fury to return. But now the end of his carnage and persecutions has come. The vengeance of insulted heaven overtakes him. He comes to his end, and there is none to help him.

I have thus endeavored to lay before my readers, so far as we have the means of doing it, the fulfillment of this remarkable prediction. It is so remarkable that I felt justified in pausing in the progress of our history, for the purpose. We know, as well as we can know any thing on the testimony of the ancients, that the prophecy of Daniel was written at least four hundred years before the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and long before any part of what we have here referred to was accomplished. And yet, with what wonderful, minute, circumstantial exactness was it fulfilled! And I have no doubt that the fulfillment would appear still more exact, if we had the *history* as accurately as we have the prophecy. But as it is, this prediction alone is enough to confound the infidel, and vindicate the claim of the book containing it to its place among the oracles of God.



## CHAPTER VII.

*Exploits of the Maccabees. History of the Jews to the death of John Hyrcanus.*

IN my last chapter I brought down the history of the times to the death of Antiochus Epiphanes. I detailed the successes of the Maccabees in Palestine ; and showed how remarkably one of the last predictions of Daniel was fulfilled, in the kings of Syria and Egypt.

Antiochus Epiphanes was succeeded by his son, Antiochus Eupator, a child only nine years of age. By his will, the father had entrusted the young king to the guardianship of Philip, one of his most faithful servants, who hastened to Antioch to assume the charge. But when he arrived, he found that Lysias had already taken upon him that office, and Philip, being too weak to contest the point, fled into Egypt.

Meanwhile, the Maccabees were busy in Palestine, defending themselves against their

heathen neighbors, the Edomites, Ammonites, and Gileadites, who had conspired together for their destruction. Of the Edomites, in two expeditions, Judas slew not less than forty thousand men. The Ammonites, under Timotheus their governor, invaded Judea with a very great army, intending nothing less than the utter destruction of the Jews. But Judas, having commended his cause to God, went forth to meet them, and left thirty thousand of their number, horse and foot, dead upon the field. The Gileadites next resolved to try their fortune in this war, and commenced by besieging and destroying such of the Jews as dwelt within their own borders. But Judas hastened to the relief of his brethren, dispersed their enemies, and slew of them eight thousand men. At the same time, his brother Simon was sent with an army into Galilee, to chastise the oppressors of God's people there.

Lysias, hearing at Antioch of these successes of the Jews, thought it time for him to interpose. Wherefore, getting together an army of eighty thousand men, besides horsemen and elephants, he pressed into Judea,

threatening, as others had done before him, utterly to exterminate the Jews, and make Jerusalem a habitation for the Gentiles. He encamped, as he had done on a former expedition, at Bethsura, a strong fortress between Jerusalem and Idumea. But Judas, nothing daunted, went forth to meet him, and slew eleven thousand foot, and sixteen hundred horsemen, and put the rest of this great army to flight. Thus humbled, Lysias was willing to give peace to the Jews. By the terms of the treaty, the decree of Epiphanes, requiring the Jews to conform to the religion of the Greeks, was wholly rescinded, and they were permitted everywhere to live according to their own laws.

But the peace thus established was soon interrupted, by the treachery of the surrounding tribes. The men of Joppa rose upon the Jews of that city, and threw two hundred of them into the sea. To chastise them for this, Judas fell upon them by night, burned their shipping and their fortifications, and slew all the men of the city that could be found.

He was next drawn quite to the other side

of Palestine, to the help of his distressed brethren in Gilead. He here encountered Timotheus a second time, who had now collected an army of 120,000 foot, and 2,500 horse, to oppose him. Judas met this great multitude at a place called Raphon, on the river Jabbok, and slew of them thirty thousand men. In another engagement with the remnant of the same army, he slew twenty-five thousand more. On his return to Jerusalem, he was obliged to pass through the city of Ephron, where Lysias had a garrison of soldiers. He desired and requested that he might be permitted to go on his way peaceably; but as his request was not granted, he carried the place by assault, slew twenty-five thousand of the inhabitants, and took their spoil. Arrived at Jerusalem from this hazardous but triumphant expedition, Judas and all his company went up to the temple, and rendered thanksgiving and praise to the God of Israel, for his most merciful interpositions in their behalf.

Judas now undertook, for the second time, to reduce the fortress of Acra at Jerusalem;

the same which Apollonius had built years before, to overlook and command the temple. But before this could be accomplished, Lysias was again upon him, with an army of one hundred and twenty thousand, horse and foot, and thirty-two elephants, attended and encouraged by the presence of the young king. This unwieldly host encamped, as before, at the fortress of Bethsura, where Judas fell upon them by night, and slew four thousand of them, before they had light enough to see where to oppose him. The next day, the two armies came to an open engagement, in which Eleazer, one of the brothers of Judas, was slain, and he was himself obliged, for the first time, to retreat. He fell back upon Jerusalem, and fortified himself within the precincts of the temple. Lysias followed and besieged him; but before the fortresses of the temple could be reduced, he was summoned to Antioch, to quell a formidable insurrection there. When about to withdraw his army from Jerusalem, he renewed his former treaty with the Jews.

The ex-high priest Menelaus, who bought the office of Antiochus Epiphanes, and who



had been the cause of most of the miseries which the Jews had suffered, was present with the Syrians at this time, hoping by some means to be re-instated. But Lysias, who knew his character, and was heartily sick of the conflict which he was constantly striving to foment, seized him on his return to Antioch, and smothered him in ashes ;—a kind of death which was inflicted only on the most atrocious criminals, and which Menelaus richly deserved. The pontifical office was now conferred upon Alcimus, a man scarcely less wicked than Menelaus himself.

But the end of Lysias, and of the young king whom he had in charge, was now come. For Demetrius, the son of Seleucus Philopator, whom Antiochus Epiphanes had defrauded of his right to the throne, having escaped from Rome where he had long been kept as an hostage, suddenly made his appearance in Syria. He pretended that he had been sent by the Roman Senate to take possession of the kingdom ; upon which the court, the soldiers and the people, all came at once into his interest, and Lysias and the young king were put to death.

Demetrius, who took the name of Soter, was early incited by Alcimus, the wicked high priest, to renew the war against the Jews. For this purpose, Bacchides was sent into Judea; and after him Nicanor, an old adversary, whom Judas had once defeated. He besieged Jerusalem and the temple, and uttered blasphemous words against it, threatening to pull it down, and build a temple to Bacchus in its place. But coming to a battle with Judas, Nicanor was slain, and his whole army routed. So entire was this destruction, that the writer of the first book of the Maccabees says, "there was not a man of the army left to carry the news of their defeat to Antioch."

Shortly after this victory, Judas sent an embassy to Rome, praying that the Jews might be acknowledged as friends, and allies of the Romans, and that a league of mutual defence might be established between them. The ambassadors were favorably received, and the request granted; but before tidings to this effect could reach Jerusalem, or Antioch, Judas Maccabæus was no more. Bacchides

having been sent a second time, into Judea, with a great army, to avenge the defeat and death of Nicanor, Judas encountered him with only eight hundred men. It was in this most unequal and desperate conflict, that he lost his life. His body was recovered by his brothers Jonathan and Simon, and honorably buried in the sepulchre of his fathers.

Of the character of Judas Maccabæus, his public acts are, perhaps, the best expositors. That he was wise in counsel and powerful in action,—brave, daring, and all but invincible, his unparalleled achievements and successes declare. But he possessed, we think, something better than all this. He had a steady faith and trust in God ; a zeal like that of Phinehas, his great progenitor ; a feeling, all the while, that he was doing the Lord's work, and that the God of Israel was with him. It was this which nerved his arm for the deadly conflict, and led him on from victory to victory. It will be said, perhaps, that he was a man of blood ; and so he was. But then his wars were all of them strictly defensive. He was placed in circumstances where he must fight

or die ; and if he died, to all human appearance, the cause which he supported must die with him. His battles were all prefaced with prayer, and ended with thanksgiving. The glory of his achievements he felt and acknowledged were due only to the Lord. In the religious aspects of his character,—in his humble prayer, his dauntless fortitude, his overcoming faith, and his devout ascriptions of thanksgiving and praise ; in the manner in which he was drawn, or rather driven, into the field of conflict, and in which he acquitted himself there ; Judas more resembled the Puritan Cromwell, than any other general of modern times. His history belongs, not merely to the Jews, but like that of Moses, and Joshua, and David, and Nehemiah, is the property of the whole church of God.

The death of Judas was followed with great discouragement and distress to his followers. The execrable high priest Alcimus triumphed everywhere, and many of the Maccabæans were put to death. In this extremity, those of them which remained, gathered around Jonathan and Simon, brothers of Judas, and

placed them at the head of their affairs. In the first year of Jonathan, which was 160 before Christ, Alcimus, the great troubler of Israel, died, and the pontificate remained vacant several years. Demetrius also, (influenced undoubtedly by letters from Rome), withdrew his forces from the country, and the land had a season of rest and peace.

But the peace and prosperity of Israel their heathen neighbors, (as in former times), could not endure. Filled with envy, they ceased not to teaze and urge the king, until Bacchides was sent with another army into Judea. The plan was, to surprise Jonathan and his followers, and cut them all off in a single night. But Jonathan had timely warning of the plot, and falling upon the conspirators, he slew the most of them. He then retired to one of his strong fortresses in the wilderness, where he so wearied and harassed Bacchides, that he was glad to make peace with him on favorable terms. Bacchides now left the country, heartily sick of this kind of warfare, and declaring that he would never more contend against the Jews ;—a promise which he faith-



fully kept. Shortly after this, Jonathan established himself at Michmash, a little way from Jerusalem, where he judged Israel according to the law, and reformed, so far as he was able, whatever was amiss in church or state.

In the eighth year of Jonathan, an impostor calling himself Alexander Balas, and pretending to be a son of Antiochus Epiphanes, made an attempt upon the throne of Syria. And so strongly was he supported, and so unpopular had Demetrius made himself with his subjects, that, for a time, he was successful. Alexander prevailed, and Demetrius was slain. While the question between them was at issue, both kings appealed to Jonathan, and made to him the most flattering offers, each hoping to gain him over to his own party. But Jonathan, having suffered so much, and so often, from Demetrius, and withal having no confidence in his promises, concluded to cast in his lot with Alexander. Nor was the new king, although an usurper, false to the engagements which he had made. He constituted Jonathan high priest of the Jews, which office continued in the Asmonean family, till the time of

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Herod. He also clothed him in purple, and caused him to be enrolled among the chief of his friends, and as one of the first princes of the empire.

In giving a history of the Jews in these times, we must not forget the large body of them who were settled in Egypt. At the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, two brothers, Ptolemy Philometer, and Ptolemy Physcon, were contending for the crown of Egypt. Philometer, the eldest, was a mild, amiable, but unfortunate prince; while Physcon was luxurious, selfish, debauched, cruel, and altogether one of the most odious characters in all antiquity. The dispute between them was referred to the Roman Senate, who concluded to divide the kingdom, giving a part to each. Philometer reigned in Alexandria, and in all lower Egypt,—the part which was most thickly settled with the Jews. Among his chief counselors was Onias, a Jew, the son of that Onias who was ejected from the pontifical office at Jerusalem, to make room for Jason, and afterwards for Menelaus. He had interest enough with the king to obtain his consent for the

building of a Jewish temple in Egypt, almost precisely similar to that at Jerusalem. The site which he chose for it was in the prefecture of Heliopolis, about twenty miles from Memphis, where a heathen temple had formerly stood. The whole province was thickly inhabited by Jews; and in it Onias built a city, calling it Onion, from his own name. In this Egyptian temple, Divine service was celebrated, in the same order and manner as in the temple at Jerusalem, for more than two hundred years. The structure was finally destroyed by the command of the Roman Emperor Vespasian.

Alexander Balas had scarcely become settled in the government of Syria, when giving himself up to luxury and pleasure, and neglecting almost entirely the affairs of his kingdom, his subjects grew uneasy, and were again wishing for a change. Whereupon Demetrius, (the son of the late king Demetrius Soter), who had been brought up in Greece, thought it a favorable opportunity to assert his claims. Accompanied by a band of Cretans, he landed in Cilicia, and soon drew around him a great

army. Jonathan thought it his duty to stand by Alexander, with whom he was in treaty, and from whom he had received distinguished favors. But not even his powerful support could save him. Demetrius prevailed, and Alexander was vanquished and slain. In consequence of his victory over the usurper, this Demetrius received the name of *Nicator*, or the *Conqueror*.

The year of Alexander Balas' death (145 before Christ) is one of considerable note in history. This year died Ptolemy Philometer, king of lower Egypt. This year Carthage was destroyed, at the close of the third Punic war. This year, ancient Corinth was also destroyed by Lucius Mummius, the Roman Consul. This, too, was the year in which Polybius closed his celebrated history, in forty books, only five of which remain. This history commences with the beginning of the second Punic war, and extends to the close of the third.

From this time, the affairs of Syria become exceedingly perplexed. Demetrius Nicator proves himself to be a cruel tyrant, neglects his duties, violates his engagements, and alien-

ates the affections of his subjects. Whereupon a conspiracy is formed by one Tryphon, who takes Antiochus Eutheus, a son of Alexander Balas, and sets him up for king in place of Demetrius.

This plot succeeds for a while, when Tryphon finds it convenient to destroy Eutheus, and put the crown upon his own head. Still Demetrius is not vanquished. He continues the war against Tryphon for a season, and then marches into the East to resist the Parthians, and to quell disturbances there. He here falls into the hands of the Parthians, and remains a captive among them for several years.

But the captive monarch leaves a brother behind him,—a younger son of Demetrius Soter, who is now summoned out of Greece to resist Tryphon, and take possession of the throne of his ancestors. He listens to the summons, comes into Syria with an army of mercenaries, drives Tryphon from the government into exile, and reigns nine years. He is known in history as Antiochus Sidetes, or the *Hunter*.

Such is a brief statement,—the briefest possible, of the changes which took place in the government of Syria, in the course of five or six years. The Jews of Palestine were variously affected, during these changes; but on the whole, their strength increased. The most painful event of the times to *them*, was the death of their noble and faithful chieftain, Jonathan. By false promises and flatteries, the wretch Tryphon got him into his hands, and took his life. He was buried at Modin, by the side of his father, and his brother Judas; and Simon, the only surviving brother, erected a noble monument over them, which was standing uninjured in the days of Eusebius, after a space of some five hundred years.

On the death of Jonathan, Simon was chosen high priest, and was acknowledged as the ruler and judge of Israel. He renewed the league already existing between the Jews and the Romans, and was constituted by Demetrius, before his captivity, a sovereign prince. He demolished that heathen fortress, which had so long been a terror and a trouble to the Jews at Jerusalem; not only razing it

to its foundations, but leveling down the hill on which it stood ; so that no similar structure could ever be built there. He established garrisons throughout the country, and fortified the port of Joppa, that he might secure to his people the benefits of commerce. Having no brother to succeed him, and finding his son, John Hyrcanus, to be a true and valiant man, he appointed him general-in-chief of all the forces of Judea.

Antiochus Sidetes had hardly become seated on his throne, when he set himself to recover Judea to his empire, and for this purpose engaged in a war with Simon. But John Hyrcanus and Judas, two of the sons of Simon, vanquished him in battle, destroyed his towers and fortresses, and slew two thousand of his men.

Three years after this, as Simon, with two of his sons, was making a tour through the cities of Judah, to see that justice was duly administered, they came to Jericho, and were invited by the governor to a festival, which he had prepared for them. But while they were eating and drinking in his house, a band of assassins, who were had in readiness, fell upon

them, and slew them. And thus ended the family of good old Matthias, and the first generation of Asmonean princes and warriors.

Happily, John Hyrcanus was not with his father and brothers at this time, but was at the fortress of Gazara, in the western part of Palestine. The treacherous governor of Jericho sent messengers immediately to surprise and destroy him, thinking to deliver the whole country into the hands of Antiochus; but John had timely warning of his danger, and no sooner did the messengers appear, than they were seized and put to death. He then hastened to Jerusalem and secured it, together with the fortresses of the temple, and was unanimously elected to the place of his father, as high priest, and sovereign ruler of the Jews.

But Antiochus, who had concerted the death of Simon, was still intent upon recovering Judea to his empire. He therefore raised an army, and ravaged the country, and shut up Hyrcanus in Jerusalem. But when he had pressed the siege to the last extremity, and the distressed Jews were almost ready to yield, the Lord put it into his heart (in oppo-

sition to most of his advisers), to listen to proposals, and to make peace with them. To be sure, a tribute was exacted of them, but the deliverance was a great one, and was owing entirely (under God), to the unexpected clemency of the king.

Some years after this, Antiochus led a great army into the East, professedly to release his captive brother Demetrius, but really to increase his dominions, by the subjection of the revolted Eastern provinces. At the first, he was successful, and recovered Media and Babylonia. John Hyrcanus accompanied him in this expedition, participated in his triumphs, and returned with glory at the end of the year. But the Syrians determined to winter in the East, and while scattered about in different places, the Parthians fell upon them and cut them all off. Antiochus himself was slain, and scarcely a man returned to tell the story of the disaster.

Meanwhile, the captive monarch Demetrius made his escape, and came back to take possession of his kingdom. Hyrcanus also, taking advantage of these disturbances, en-

larged his dominions, freed himself from all subjection to the Syrian yoke, and became an independent prince. He took Shechem, the principal seat of the Samaritans, and destroyed their temple, which Sanballat had built for them on mount Gerizim. He conquered the Idumeans, who had long dwelt in the southern part of what was anciently Judea, and compelled them either to embrace the Jewish religion, or to leave the country. They chose the former alternative, were circumcised, and became, as to their religion, Jews. From this period, we hear no more of the Idumeans or Edomites, as a distinct people. Hyrcanus also sent an embassy to the Romans, to inform them of his position and prospects, and to seek the continuance of their friendship. His ambassadors were graciously received, the independence of Judea was acknowledged, and it was decreed that the Syrians should no longer be permitted to invade the Jewish territories, or to march their armies through them.

I have before said that Demetrius, after having been so long a captive among the Par-

thians, escaped, on the death of Antiochus his brother, and recovered his kingdom. He projected an expedition against Egypt, and marched an army to Pelusium to commence the war. But he was obliged to return to quell disturbances in his own kingdom, soon after which he was dethroned and slain.

The kingdom of Syria was now divided between Cleopatra, the widow of the late king, and an usurper by the name of Zebina, who pretended to be a son of Alexander Balas. But neither of them lived more than a year. Zabina was slain in a tumult at Antioch; and Cleopatra, who was a very wicked woman, was compelled by her son to drink a cup of poison which she had prepared for him.

The Syrian empire, after some severe struggles, was again rent into two parts. Two sons of Cleopatra, the one by Demetrius, and the other by his brother Antiochus, divided it between themselves. Antiochus Cyzicenus, reigned at Damascus over Cœlo-Syria and Phenicia, and Antiochus Grypus reigned at Antioch over all the rest. While these brothers were contending one with the other, Hyr-

canus was profiting by their dissensions, and growing continually in riches and in power. In the year 110 before Christ, he besieged and took Samaria, which had been inhabited by Greeks from the time of Alexander the great. He not only demolished its walls and houses, but by means of trenches, he laid the whole site of the city under water. From this time, he became master of all Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, and was regarded as one of the most considerable princes of the age in which he lived.

We turn now for a moment from Syria and Palestine, to contemplate the affairs of Egypt. On the death of Philometer, Ptolemy Physcon married his widow, and became sole monarch of the country. He was, as I have said, one of the most odious and brutal characters in all antiquity. He was deformed in body, as well as mind. He was ugly in features, short in stature, and of such monstrous lateral dimensions that no one man could encompass him with both his arms. Yet, notwithstanding his deformities and his wickedness, he reigned over Egypt fifty-two years ; twenty-

three in connection with Philometer, and twenty-nine alone. His ancestors had distinguished themselves as friends of learning, and had gathered around them learned men from all parts of the civilized world. But Physcon, by his cruelty, drove these men from him, and scattered them abroad, wherever they could find a place. Indeed, he drove out or destroyed most of the ancient families of Alexandria, and peopled the city to a great extent with foreigners.

In the thirty-eighth year of his reign, Jesus, the son of Sirach, came from Jerusalem into Egypt, and translated from the original Hebrew into Greek the book which, in our apocryphal Scriptures, is called Ecclesiasticus. It was written by Jesus, the father of Sirach, about the time of Seleucus Philopator, while Onias II. was high priest at Jerusalem. It consists chiefly of short pithy sentences or proverbs, after the manner of Solomon, many of which are weighty and valuable for the conduct of life.

Ptolemy Physcon was succeeded in the

government of Egypt by his two sons, Lathyrus and Alexander.

Hyrchanus continued in the government of Palestine, after the death of his father Simon, twenty-nine years. He was the founder of the castle Baris, near the temple in Jerusalem, which was the palace of the Asmonian princes, as long as they reigned there. Herod afterwards converted it into the castle Antonia, which was standing in the Apostolic age. (See Acts 21 : 37.) In the latter part of his life, Hyrchanus had a quarrel with the Pharisees, which caused him and his successors no little trouble. Up to this time he had rather favored the Pharisees, and was regarded as one of their number. But being charged by one of them, falsely, with being the son of a captive woman, and therefore incapable according to the law, of sustaining the high priest's office, and the rest of the Pharisees not consenting that the slanderer should be punished as Hyrchanus felt that he deserved ; he regarded them all as in some way concerned in the libel, and responsible for it. He separated from the Pharisees, therefore,

in disgust, and attached himself rather to the Sadducees than to them. Hyrcanus died in the year before Christ 106,—the same in which Pompey and Cicero were born; and was succeeded, both in the pontifical and regal office, by his eldest son, Aristobulus.

As I have spoken of the Pharisees in this connection, it may not be improper to close the chapter with a short account of this troublesome sect. Of the origin of the Sadducees, I have already treated. They were the followers of Sadoc, a religious teacher at Jerusalem, who flourished in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus. They adhered strictly to the law, rejecting the traditions, and rejecting also the doctrine of future rewards and punishments. These men were the *liberalists* of their times. They were never numerous, but embraced many of the higher and wealthier families among the Jews. The Pharisees, on the contrary, were a *popular* sect. They carried with them, not only the scribes and men learned in the law, but the great mass of the common people. They received as Divine, not only the books of Moses, but all the other

books of the Old Testament. They also received the traditions of the elders, ascribing to them the same authority as to the written word. They held to the doctrine of the resurrection, and to a state of rewards and punishments beyond the grave. In practice, they were strict formalists, who talked much of religion, and made pretensions to superior sanctity. They are supposed to have derived their name from the Hebrew word *Pharas*, signifying *to separate*; because they separated themselves from all men who did not receive their peculiar notions, and come up to their standard. They probably originated at the same time with the *traditions* and the *Mish-nical doctors*, not long after the period of Simon the Just. They were sometimes called *Chasidim*, or *Chasidæans*, i. e. the *pious men*; but we do not hear of them under the name of *Pharisees*, until the age of Hyrcanus. They continued down to the time of the Saviour; and since his time, have swallowed up nearly all other distinctions among the Jews.

CHAPTER VIII.

History of the Jews to the end of the Asmonean Dynasty, and the commencement of the Reign of Herod.

AT the close of the last chapter, two kings were reigning in Syria, Antiochus Cyzicenus and Antiochus Grypus. Two kings were also reigning in Egypt, Lathyrus and Alexander, both sons of Ptolemy Physcon. Aristobulus, the son of Hyrcanus, was high priest and ruler of the Jews.

From this point, it will not be necessary to give a detailed account of the affairs of Syria and Egypt. Both nations were enervated by vice, and torn and weakened by perpetual dissensions, and the way was fast preparing for them to be swallowed up in the wide spreading, engulfing power of Rome. Antiochus Grypus was slain in the twenty-ninth year of his reign—the year 96 before Christ; and three years later, Cyzicenus was slain by Se-

leucus, the eldest son of Grypus. Shortly after, Seleucus was slain by Antiochus Eusebes, a son of Cyzicenus. Antiochus, the second son of Grypus, then attacked Eusebes, and was overcome, killed, and his army cut to pieces. The contest was now carried on, with various success, between Eusebes, and the three surviving sons of Grypus, viz., Pilip, Demetrius, and Dionysius, until the Syrians, wearied out with the contentions of these troublesome princes, offered the crown of Syria to Tigranes, king of Armenia. This took place in the year 83 before Christ.

Meanwhile, the affairs of Egypt were scarcely more settled than those of Syria. Although there were nominally, as I said, two kings of Egypt, yet Cleopatra, the mother of both, was virtually the sovereign ruler. Because Lathyrus, her eldest son, displeased her, she took from him his wife, drove him out of Egypt, and left him only the government of Cyprus. Upon this, Alexander, her youngest son, fled from her in disgust, and was with difficulty persuaded to return. Some years after this, Cleopatra undertook to destroy

Alexander, that she might reign alone ; but he discovered her design, and put her to death. For the murder of his mother, Alexander was driven out of the country, defeated and slain, and Lathyrus became the sole monarch of Egypt. In the year 80 before Christ, Lathyrus died, and the crown descended to a son of his deceased brother, whose name also was Alexander.

With these brief notices of Syria and Egypt, let us now turn to the history of the Jews. The first generation of Maccabæan princes were noble men. Some of them, we think, were truly pious men. Our knowledge of the second generation is limited almost entirely to John Hyrcanus, the son of Simon. And though his character was less virtuous than that of his immediate predecessors, yet he was, on the whole, a brave, true-hearted and faithful ruler. Certainly the Jews owed to him a debt of gratitude, which some of them were little inclined to pay.

Hyrcanus left five sons ; but these had not been disciplined and educated like their fathers, and they exhibited very different traits of char-

acter, as we shall see. Aristobulus, the eldest, (who took upon him the title of king) commenced his reign by casting his mother into prison, where she perished with hunger. He also imprisoned his three youngest brothers. For Antigonus, who was next to himself in age, he had more affection, and entrusted to him, in part, the administration of affairs. The two brothers conquered the Ituræans, who dwelt in the northeasterly part of Palestine, and proselyted them to the Jewish religion. After his return from this expedition, Aristobulus became jealous of Antigonus, and caused him to be waylaid in one of the secret passages leading to and from the temple, and put to death.

But from this time, the cruel monarch enjoyed not one moment's peace. He was sick in body, but more diseased and distressed in mind. His guilt in destroying his mother, and then murdering his faithful brother, tortured his conscience, and contributed, with other causes, to hasten his end. He reigned only one year.

Upon his death, his three brothers were re-

leased from prison, and Alexander Janneus, the eldest of them, succeeded to the mitre and the throne. The next eldest brother attempted to depose Alexander, and was executed; but the youngest, Absalom, being contented to live in a private way, was tolerated by the king.

Alexander was a restless, ambitious prince, who experienced almost every variety of fortune, but left his dominions wider than he found them. This was partly owing to his own bravery and skill, but more to the dissensions of the neighboring States. His borders were first invaded by Lathyrus, one of the kings of Egypt, who defeated and might have ruined him,—had not Cleopatra, who was hostile to Lathyrus, come to his relief. Next, he was drawn into a snare by Cleopatra, and would have been slain by her, but for the intercession of one of her chief counselors, who was an Alexandrian Jew. After the departure of Cleopatra, Alexander made some important conquests. He took the fortresses of Gadara and Amathus, on the other side of the Jordan; and then directing his march south-

ward, he got possession of Raphia, and Gaza, and Anthedon. He subdued also the Gileadites and Moabites; but in an expedition against Gaulonitis, he fell into an ambush, lost his army, and came very near losing his life.

In the year 91 before Christ, there was a civil war in Judea, which wasted the country for the space of six years, and cost the lives of not less than fifty thousand Jews. It grew out of the old quarrel of the Pharisees with Hyrcanus, and their consequent hatred of him, and of his house. While Alexander was offering sacrifices in the temple, they commenced pelting him with citrons, and calling him by the most opprobrious names, which enraged him to such a degree, that he fell upon them and slew six thousand men. Still the Pharisees were not subdued, but persisting in their opposition, the king asked them what they would have, promising to satisfy them, if it was in his power. To this they replied that but one thing would satisfy them, and that was for him to cut his throat. On no other terms would they be at peace with him; and he

might think himself happy if they suffered him to rest even in his grave.

Seeing them actuated by such a spirit, Alexander prepared for war; and his enemies called in the aid of one of the Syrian kings to oppose him. In this contest, Alexander was beaten, and would have been ruined, had not his enemies become alarmed at their own successes, and volunteered, some of them, for his relief. From this time, he pursued the rebels with great energy, until he drove the most of them into the fortress of Bethsura, where they were besieged and captured. To be revenged on them for their obstinacy, he took eight hundred of the leaders to Jerusalem, and crucified them together. And as though this were not enough, while they hung dying on the cross, he butchered their wives and children before their eyes. This was an act of barbarity and cruelty, such as the world has seldom witnessed, and for which he could have no excuse. And yet it was not without its effect upon those of the rebels who survived. Horror stricken at such an example, they fled the country, and Alexander had

no more trouble from them to the day of his death.

Being thus freed from civil war, Alexander undertook still further to extend his dominions. He took Dios and Pella, and the strong fortress of Gerasa, where he obtained a large amount of treasure. Two years later, he pushed his conquests still farther beyond the Jordan.

He subdued Golan, Seleucia, the vale of Antiochus, and the fortress of Gamala. Returned from these conquests, Alexander became more quiet and luxurious, in consequence of which he contracted a quartan fever, from which he never recovered. He died in his camp, at the siege of Rayaba, a fortress beyond Jordan, in the country of the Gerasens, having reigned twenty-seven years. He left a widow, Alexandra, who was to succeed him in the government, and two sons Hyrcanus and Aristobulus. And fearing the rage of the Pharisees, who were still the most numerous sect among the Jews, he enjoined upon his wife, before his death, to make her peace with them, and to be guided in her adminis-

tration by their counsels. She followed his directions, and succeeded in obtaining for him an honorable burial, and for herself and her sons a quiet establishment in the government.

It may appear to those, who hear only of the wars and cruelties of these times that there were no pious people left in Israel—that the true church of God had become extinct. But this would be an unwarrantable conclusion. As in the days of Ahab, God reserved to himself seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal, so in these times there was undoubtedly a remnant. Down in the humbler walks of life, away from the tumult and the strife of kings, we may hope there were many, who loved the God of Israel, and served him in sincerity and truth. It was in these times, or near them, that good Zachariah and Elizabeth were born,—the father and mother of John the Baptist. In these times, also, were born Anna and Simeon, who were present in the temple, when the infant Saviour was brought there by his parents, “to do for him after the custom of the law.” (Luke 2: 25—38.)

In the year 89 before Christ commenced the war of the Romans against Mithridates, king of Pontus. This, next to the Carthaginian wars, was the most terrible contest in which the Romans ever engaged; and Mithridates, next to Hannibal, was the most fearful enemy which they were ever called to encounter. This war was begun by Lucius Cassius, Roman præfect of Pergamos; was carried on chiefly by Sylla and Lucullus; and was finished by Pompey, in the year before Christ 62. It continued with little cessation, for twenty-seven years. It brought the Romans into contact with nearly all those parts of Asia which had constituted the old Grecian and Assyrian empires, and in its issue subjected all to their power. But it is not my purpose to speak of these conquests any farther than they affected, directly or indirectly, the concerns of the Jews.

I have before said that the Syrians, tired of the dissensions of the Antiochian princes, had placed the government of their country in the hands of Tigranes, king of Armenia. In the progress of the Mithridatic war, in which Ti-

granes was deeply involved, Antiochus Asiaticus, a son of Antiochus Eusebes, seized the government of Syria, and reigned there for several years. But when Pompey came into Syria, in the year 64 before Christ, he took from him the sceptre, and put a final end to the empire of the Seleucidæ, after it had continued 258 years. From this time Syria, of which we have had occasion to speak so frequently, became a Roman province.

Egypt was at this time too much enfeebled to exert much influence upon the surrounding nations. It claims notice here chiefly from the fact, that it contained a Jewish temple and altar, and a large body of the descendants of Israel. I have before remarked that, upon the death of Lathyrus, Alexander, a son of his deceased brother, came to the throne. He reigned, by the sufferance of the Romans, fifteen years, when the people rose against him, and drove him out of the kingdom. He died shortly after at Tyre. His successor was an illegitimate son of Lathyrus, called Ptolemy Auletes, or *the Piper*. He is said to have exceeded all the Ptolemies in effemi-

nacy, as much as his grandfather, Ptolemy Physcon, did in wickedness. Still, he was suffered to rule over Egypt fourteen years. Dying, he left the throne to his eldest son and daughter, Ptolemy and Cleopatra. This is that Cleopatra who afterwards became so famous, or rather infamous, for her amours with Julius Cæsar, Mark Anthony, and other distinguished Romans. Having procured the death of two of her brothers, she reigned over Egypt, for a time, alone. After the fall of Anthony, she caused herself to be bitten by an asp, and so died, in the thirtieth year before the birth of Christ. And in her ended the dynasty of the Ptolemies in Egypt, after it had continued, from the death of Alexander the great, 294 years. From this time, Egypt became a Roman province, and was governed by a præfect sent from Rome.

Let us now come back again to the history of the Jews. Alexander Janneus left his government, as I have said, to his queen Alexandra, to be held by her in reserve for her two sons, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus. Hyrcanus, who was a quiet man, she advanced

to the high-priesthood ; while to Aristobulus, who had more capacity and ambition, she gave the command of the army. As, in obedience to her dying husband, Alexandra had made her peace with the Pharisees, and consented to rule according to their wishes, they undertook the direction of her affairs. They re-established the authority of the traditions which Hyrcanus had rejected. They opened the prisons, and set those at liberty, who were confined on the charge of rebellion against the late government. They recalled those from exile, who had fled, or been banished, for the same cause. They instigated the queen to put some of the principal supporters of the late king to death, on the ground of their participation in the cruelties he had perpetrated. And they would have destroyed more of this number, but that the queen, in order to save them, dispersed them in the garrisons and frontier towns of her dominions. Alexandra died in the year 69 before Christ, after a peaceful and prosperous reign of nine years.

She designated no one to succeed her, but the Pharisees immediately placed Hyrcanus,

her eldest son, upon the throne. Aristobulus, however, was intent upon reigning; and being popular with the army, and having most of the garrisons under his control, he had every facility for carrying his purpose into effect. The question was ere long decided in battle, in which Hyrcanus was vanquished, and Aristobulus mounted the throne. Hyrcanus now retired into private life; and there, could he have been left to his own preference, he would have remained. But there was about him one Antipater, the father of Herod, who professed the warmest attachment to him, and who persuaded him that he must either recover his crown, or die by the hands of Aristobulus. This Antipater was an Idumean by birth, who had embraced the Jews religion at the time when his people were proselyted by John Hyrcanus. At his instigation, the conquered king fled to Aretas, an Arabian prince, who came with an army of fifty thousand men, with a view to replace him on his throne. Unable to withstand so great a force, Aristobulus retreated, and shut himself up in Jerusalem. He was here closely besieged, and

might have been taken, but that the Roman præfect at Damascus interposed, and compelled Aretas to return to his own country. Hyrcanus, therefore, was again an exile, and Aristobulus kept possession of the throne.

Not long after this, Pompey arrived at Damascus, where he was met by ambassadors, and loaded with rich presents, from all the surrounding nations. Among the rest, Aristobulus and Hyrcanus appeared before him, to obtain a settlement of their disputes. Pompey listened to their respective statements, but deferred deciding the question between them until his return from an expedition into Arabia. Meanwhile, Aristobulus was strengthening his garrisons, and making all possible preparation for war ; which was an injury to his cause in the eyes of the Romans.

On the return of Pompey, the courage of Aristobulus forsook him. He offered to surrender all his fortified places, and to give a large sum of money, on condition that the war might cease. Pompey agreed to the proposal, and sent Gabinius, with a division of the army, to Jerusalem, to receive the stipulated sum.

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But when he arrived there, he found the gates shut against him, and no money was to be had. Pompey now invested the city, and by the help of Hyrcanus' party, soon gained admission within the walls. Aristobulus and his followers retreated to the temple, where they hoped to be able to hold out for a long time. But Pompey brought up his military engines, and pressed on the siege with great vigor. He had an advantage over the Jews, on account of their unwillingness to do any thing to oppose or hinder him on the Sabbath day. At the end of three months, a breach was made in the wall, and the temple was taken. The Romans rushed in, and put twelve thousand of the Jews to the sword. Among these were many of the priests, who, being then engaged in the sacrifices, would not move from the altars, nor interrupt their rites, to escape the attack of their enemies. They were accordingly slain, and their blood was mingled with their sacrifices.

The temple was taken in midsummer of the year 63 before Christ, during the consulship of M. T. Cicero, on the very day which was

observed, with fasting and lamentation, in commemoration of the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Pompey, attended by his generals, went into the temple, even into the holy of holies ; but he left untouched all the sacred utensils, and even the treasures of the temple, amounting to two thousand talents of gold, and gave orders that the holy places should be purified, and divine service continued as before. He appointed Hyrcanus to be high priest and prince of the country ; but forbade that he should wear a crown, or call himself king, or extend his territories beyond their ancient boundaries.

Soon after this, Pompey returned to Rome, laden with the spoils of conquered countries, and attended by hundreds of noble prisoners to grace his triumph. Among these, were Aristobulus with his two daughters and two sons, Antigonus and Alexander. Before they arrived at Rome, however, Alexander contrived to make his escape, and returning into Judea, soon gathered around him a little army. So long as he was opposed by Hyrcanus alone, he carried every thing before him ; but when

the Romans came to the assistance of the high priest, Alexander was obliged to take refuge in a fortified castle. He was closely besieged, and in the end was obliged to submit; after which Hyrcanus, for a time, continued to enjoy his honors unmolested.

These, however, were more nominal than real; for Gabinius, the Roman general, proceeded to new model the Jewish government, making it rather an aristocracy than a monarchy. He deprived the Sanhedrim of all authority, and setting up five independent tribunals in different parts of the country, he committed to them the power of administering justice, each in its respective District. This necessarily threw the whole power of the country into the hands of the nobles who presided in these courts, leaving to Hyrcanus little more than a name. And so things continued for the next ten years, when Julius Cæsar restored them to their ancient order.

It was not long after this, that Aristobulus and his son Antigonus escaped from Rome, returned into Judea, and made another attempt to recover their lost power. But it



ended, as Alexander's had done, in their defeat and capture ; though their condition was so much bettered by it, that all the family, except Aristobulus, succeeded in obtaining their liberty.

In the year 54 before Christ, Gabinius was removed from the government of Syria, and M. L. Crassus came into his place. But the province was not at all benefited by the change. Crassus was even more faithless and grasping than his predecessor. Soon after his arrival in the country, he came to Jerusalem, with his soldiers, that he might plunder the temple. Eleazer, who had charge of the treasures, promised him a bar of gold, weighing three hundred minæ, which was concealed in a beam at the entrance of the holy of holies, on condition that he would leave the remaining treasures untouched. This condition Crassus solemnly swore to observe ; but as soon as he had got possession of the golden bar, he proceeded to rob the temple of ten thousand talents more ; a sum exceeding two millions of pounds sterling, or ten millions of our money. But his ill-gotten treasure did him no good.



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He expended it in fitting out an expedition against the Parthians, in which he was drawn into an ambush, and put to death. So true is the declaration of Solomon, that "the robbery of the wicked shall destroy them."

In the wars which now commenced between Cæsar and Pompey, Aristobulus and his sons espoused the cause of Cæsar, and were sent by him into Syria, that they might oppose the interests of Pompey there. But Aristobulus was poisoned, while on the journey, and his eldest son, Alexander, was seized and beheaded in Judea. There remained, therefore, only Antigonus; nor was Cæsar, after his triumph over Pompey, at all inclined to show him favor. He continued Hyrcanus in the priesthood, abolished the courts which Gabinius had established, restored the government to its ancient form, and passing over entirely the claims of Antigonus, appointed two sons of Antipater, Phasael and Herod, the one to the government of Judea, and the other to that of Galilee.

Julius Cæsar had received much assistance from the Jews, especially during his campaign

in Egypt ; and he showed himself their constant friend. Before leaving Egypt, he confirmed all the privileges of the Egyptian Jews, and commemorated their important services by an inscription on a brazen pillar which he caused to be erected at Alexandria. And in Judea, the people are said to have enjoyed greater prosperity, during his brief administration, than they had done at any time since the Babylonish captivity. The walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, which Pompey had broken down ; the tribute due to Rome was remitted every Sabbatical year ; while the affairs of the government were wisely administered, (under Hyrcanus as high priest) by Antipater and his two sons. It was at this time that Hyrcanus sent to the Roman Senate a shield of gold of very great value ; upon which the Jews, by a decree of the Senate, were publicly acknowledged as the allies of the Romans.

Herod, the youngest son of Antipater, was now governor of Galilee ; and he gave early proof of a bold and enterprising spirit. He attacked the robbers of Galilee, who were very numerous, and put all to death who fell in his

power. By this means, he secured the confidence of the people, and of the præfect of Syria; but the Sanhedrim at Jerusalem, thinking he had made too free with human life, summoned him before them. He obeyed the summons; but instead of appearing as a criminal, he presented himself before his judges armed, in a purple robe, and surrounded with his guards. The members of the Sanhedrim were confounded, and dare not proceed against him. But one old man, whom Josephus calls Sameas, reproved them for their cowardice, and assured them that the time would come, when Herod would not pardon them as readily as they now were disposed to pardon him;—a prediction which was literally fulfilled.

The year 43 before Christ was a very long one. It was made to consist of four hundred and forty-five days, to compensate for the errors of the ancient calendar. The next year was fixed upon for the introduction of the new calendar, or for the commencement of the *Julian year*, consisting of 365 days and six hours. Two years after this, Cæsar gave permission to the Jews to fortify Jerusalem.

He also restored to them all that they had formerly possessed, and confirmed them in the enjoyment of all their privileges. The same year (41 before Christ) while preparing to leave Rome on an expedition against the Parthians, this great man was treacherously murdered by Brutus, Cassius, and some others, in the senate house, after he had governed the Roman empire three years and six months.

The death of Cæsar was followed with much confusion, not only at Rome, but in all the provinces. Brutus and his party were obliged to flee from the city, leaving the direction of affairs chiefly in the hands of Mark Anthony and Octavius Cæsar. This Octavius Cæsar (afterwards the great Augustus Cæsar) was a nephew of Julius Cæsar, who claimed to be his adopted son and heir. After much contention between these two rivals for power, Lepidus was associated with them; and thus was constituted a *triumvirate*, who thought to govern Rome. It was during their bloody administration that Cicero was put to death.

Meanwhile, the East was in open rebellion against the triumvirate. The party of Brutus



controlled all the country from the Euphrates to Macedon. The fate of Brutus was decided in the battle of Philippi (in the year 39 before Christ) where he was defeated, and in despair put an end to his own life. The following year, the triumvirate divided the empire among themselves ; Lepidus receiving Africa, Anthony the East, and Octavius Cæsar the West. Italy they agreed to hold in common.

During these commotions, the Jews had no great reason to complain of the Romans, except that oppressive pecuniary exactions were sometimes made upon them. But they had frequent disturbances among themselves. Antipater was put to death by one Malichus, a Jew, through envy that an Idumean should have so much influence at Jerusalem. Next, Phasael and Herod slew Malichus, that they might avenge the death of their father. Hyrcanus, the high priest, espoused at first the cause of Malichus ; but not being able to resist the two brothers, he was fain to make his peace with them, by giving Mariamne, his beautiful granddaughter, to Herod to wife.

The discontented among the Jews made re-



peated solicitations to Anthony against Herod ; but all without effect. They then recalled Antigonus, the surviving son of Aristobulus, into Palestine, intending to place him on his father's throne ; but he was defeated by Herod, and compelled, for a time, to relinquish his purpose.

But Herod's turn at length came to experience reverses and defeat. While Anthony was dallying in the embraces of Cleopatra in Egypt, the Parthians, assisted by some discontented Romans, seized the opportunity to invade Western Asia, and were carrying all before them. Not daring to encounter them single-handed, Herod fled, first to Arabia, and then to Egypt in pursuit of Anthony ; but not finding him there, he passed on to Rome. Meanwhile, Antigonus, by the help of the Parthians,—which help he purchased for a thousand talents, and five hundred female slaves,—took upon himself the government of Judea. He seized his venerable uncle Hyrcanus, cut off his ears, and gave him into the hands of the Parthians. Phasaël, the brother of Herod, he meant to have crucified ; but his victim anticipated him

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by putting an end to his own life. He now garrisoned Jerusalem, and provided it with ample stores, intending, if attacked, to hold out to the last extremity.

Nor were these precautions needless. Herod pleaded his cause so effectually at Rome, that he obtained a grant of the crown of Judea for himself, and the assistance of a Roman army to put him in possession of it. Thus furnished, he was again in Palestine sooner than could have been anticipated, to renew the war. After various reverses and delays, which it is not necessary to recapitulate, he at length drove Antigonus within the walls of his capital, where he closely besieged him with an army of sixty thousand men. After a desperate resistance, which continued about a year, Jerusalem was again taken by storm and suffered the extreme rigor of military execution. Enraged at the obstinate defence which the Jews had made, the Romans continued to massacre and pillage, after all resistance had ceased; and to prevent the total destruction of his capital, Herod was obliged to buy them off with a large sum of money. Twenty-seven

years before this, and at the same time in the year, Jerusalem had been taken and sacked by Pompey.\*

The fate of Antigonius was such as he had reason to expect. Anthony was inclined to spare him for the purpose of gracing his triumph at Rome; but at the solicitation of Herod he was condemned to death, and was executed by the axe of the lictor, like a common malefactor. And thus ended the Asmonean dynasty, after it had subsisted a hundred and twenty-six years;—"a noble and illustrious house," says Josephus, "distinguished by their descent, by the dignity of their pontificate, and by the great exploits of their ancestors for the Jews."

In the year 37 before Christ, Herod took possession of the throne of Judea; not as an independent sovereign, but as subject and tributary to the Romans. Of the circumstances of his reign I shall speak in the following chapter.

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\* At the same time of the year, Jerusalem was taken and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, viz., on the ninth day of the Jewish month Tammuz, or about midsummer with us.

## CHAPTER IX.

*The Reign of Herod. His immediate Descendants. The Birth of Christ.*

IN the last chapter, I pursued the history of the Jewish state to the termination of the Syrian and Egyptian dynasties, by which it had been successively ruled ; also, of the Asmonean dynasty, under which it assumed, for a time, a degree of independence ; and down the broad pathway of the Roman dominion, to the time of Herod. Under the triumvirate, which was still in power, Anthony had the chief government of the East, and Herod was a tributary under him. Of the principal events of Herod's checkered and eventful administration, I am now to speak.

Herod commenced his reign by murdering most of the Jewish nobles who had opposed him. He condemned to death all the members of the Sanhedrim, except Sameas and



Pollio, who are said by the Jews to be the same as Shammai and Hillel, the founders of two separate schools. He exalted to the high priesthood Ananel, a common priest from Babylon, who had neither connections nor influence to render him dangerous. Hyrcanus, who had been so long high priest, and who was now living in exile among the Parthians, Herod invited back to Jerusalem ; but it was only to ensnare him, and accomplish his destruction. At the earnest request of Mariamne, his wife, who was a granddaughter of Hyrcanus, Herod deposed Ananel from the pontificate, when he had held it only two years, and put Aristobulus into his place. This Aristobulus was a brother of Mariamne, and a very desirable young man. But Herod soon grew jealous of him, and caused him also to be put to death.

But by this act of cruelty, he endangered his own life to Anthony. For Alexandra, the mother of the murdered young man, accused Herod to Cleopatra, and Cleopatra to Anthony ; and he was summoned to Laodicea to



give an account of himself. But by flatteries and bribes, Herod succeeded in satisfying his Roman master, and came off in safety.

Meanwhile, the triumvirate which for several years had governed Rome, was hastening to its dissolution. First, Octavius had a quarrel with Lepidus, defeated him, and obliged him to retire into private life. The empire was now in the hands of Octavius and Anthony. But Anthony, instead of exerting himself as a wise man should, was wasting his time and forfeiting his character and influence, in the arms of Cleopatra. He was either with her at Alexandria, or she must be with him, wherever the affairs of the public required his presence. At one time he had proceeded as far as Antioch on an expedition against the Parthians, when Cleopatra sent after him that she was sick of love, and should certainly die, if he did not return. So he gave up all thoughts of the Parthian war, and hastened back to the embrace of his mistress.

This ensnaring and wicked connection at length proved the ruin of Anthony; for in

addition to the neglect and consequent confusion of public affairs, it brought him into direct conflict with Octavius. Anthony had a wife all this time at Rome, and she was the sister of Octavius; and it could not be expected that he would look coldly on, and see the honor of his sister sacrificed to the influence of a harlot.

Octavius declared war against Anthony in the spring of the year 30 before Christ. Two years afterwards, the question between them was decided in a sea fight at Actium, where Anthony was beaten. His land forces now forsook him, and very soon his affairs became desperate. Even Cleopatra turned against him at the last, hoping thereby to ingratiate herself with his rival; but in this she was disappointed. Both Anthony and Cleopatra fell by their own hands, in the year 27 before Christ. From this time Octavius, or (as he was afterwards called) Augustus, became the virtual emperor of Rome; though he declined using the title, and kept up an appearance of the ancient republican forms

of government. From Egypt he returned through Asia Minor and Greece to Rome, where he arrived in the following year, in the month Sextilis, or the sixth month, which is still called August, after his own name. The previous month is called July, from Julius Cæsar.

Herod warmly espoused the cause of Anthony, and continued to assist him as long as there was any hope. But when all hope of success had failed, he resolved, if possible, to make his peace with Augustus. He was aware that this was a doubtful undertaking, and before entering upon it, he placed his favorite wife Mariamne and her mother in the castle of Alexandrium, with strict orders to the commandant to put both of them to death, whenever they should receive certain notice that he had been slain. After these preparations, Herod set forward to meet Augustus, and found him refreshing himself at Rhodes. Having been admitted to his presence he laid his crown aside, and frankly acknowledged all that he had done for Anthony, and what a

faithful friend he had been to him, so long as his good offices were accepted. "And now," says he, addressing himself to Augustus, "I propose to be the same to you. I am in your power, and at your disposal, will you accept of such a friend?" Augustus, who had at first exerted himself to procure the crown of Judea for Herod, was pleased with his frankness, accepted his proposals, and confirmed him in his kingdom.

Herod returned to Judea much elated with his success, and found the state of affairs such as he could wish, except that his beloved wife Mariamne, who had learned his murderous order respecting her, was in great trouble, and her affections were entirely alienated from her husband. She repelled with disdain all his attempts to please her, and to promote a reconciliation with her. She reproached him with the murder of her family,—her father, her brother, her uncle Antigonus, and her grandfather Hyrcanus. She reproached his mother and sister, on account of the meanness of their birth; and they, in turn, made every



exertion to excite the hatred of Herod against her. These domestic troubles continued and increased, till they could be endured no longer. Herod added another to the list of his murders. He caused Mariamne to be put to death on the false charge of adultery.

But this new cruelty, instead of relieving, served only to aggravate his distress. Such was his remorse for his crimes, and his anguish in remembrance of his murdered wife, that he withdrew from all society, and shut himself up in Samaria, where he was attacked with dangerous disease. He at length recovered, but his afflictions were not sanctified to him. So far from softening, they tended only to harden his heart. He became more ferocious and tyrannical than ever, and on the slightest suspicions, would order his best friends to be put to death.

When the Asmonean family had been all removed, and there were no longer any aspirants to the throne, Herod began openly to introduce innovations upon the Jewish customs. He built a theatre at Jerusalem, and



an amphitheatre, in which games were celebrated every fifth year, in honor of Augustus. These were a cause of great dissatisfaction to the Jews, and a band of them conspired together to assassinate Herod, as he was going into the theatre. The conspirators were discovered and executed; and many others were executed with them, as being implicated in the plot.

Finding that he could no longer trust his subjects, Herod proceeded to erect fortresses for his own security, and to garrison them with foreign soldiers, hired for the purpose. He fortified Samaria, which had been destroyed by John Hyrcanus, and rebuilt, but not fortified, by the præfect Gabinius. He fortified Strabo's tower, a strong castle in the plain of Esdrælon, and called it Cesarea. He also built Gaba, in Galilee, and Heshbon, in Perea.

Still, Herod was not indifferent to the good opinion of his subjects. He valued it highly, and often made great sacrifices in order to obtain it. In the year 22 before Christ, there

was a distressing drought in Palestine, followed by famine, and its usual concomitant—pestilence. Herod exhausted his treasury, and even sold the plate from his table, for the purpose of procuring provisions from Egypt. At this time, most of the sheep in the country were slaughtered, both on account of the scarcity of provisions, and because the drought had destroyed the pasturage. Herod, at his own expense, procured great quantities of wool, in order to supply his people with clothing. By kindnesses such as these, he did something to abate the hatred of his subjects; but soon his government became again so tyrannical, that all remembrance of his favors was obliterated.

When Palestine had recovered, in some degree, from the effects of famine, Herod commenced building him a splendid palace after the Grecian style of architecture, on Mount Zion. He built, also, a castle, called Herodium, which was afterwards his tomb. He was exceedingly fond of architecture, and erected many splendid edifices in different

parts of his dominions, hoping thereby to immortalize his fame. About this time, Herod sent the two sons which his murdered Mariamne had borne to him, to Rome to be educated. Augustus received them with great favor, and in token of confidence still further enlarged the dominions of Herod.

But his increase of power gave him no additional favor with the Jews. They distrusted him, they hated him, and were watching an opportunity to rise against him. This led him to institute a stricter espionage, and a more rigorous government over them. He forbade all assemblages of the people, under the severest penalties. He employed a great number of spies, and spared no pains or expense to make them diligent and faithful. He frequently disguised himself, and went out secretly among the people, that he might learn their real sentiments respecting him. Many of those who were discontented and refractory were by these means discovered, and were put to death. He at length required the whole body of his people (with the exception of a few who

deemed all oaths unlawful) to bind themselves to him by an oath of allegiance.

In the year 16 before Christ, Herod formed the design of erecting a new temple at Jerusalem, on a larger scale, and in a style of greater magnificence than the old one. He laid his project before the people at one of the great festivals, when many were brought together at Jerusalem; and when he found that they distrusted his intentions, he promised not to demolish the old temple, till the materials for the new one should be all in readiness. Two years were spent in collecting materials; and then the old temple was taken down gradually, as its parts could be replaced by those of the new building. In this way, the Jews were never without a temple, and the new building seemed but an improved continuation of the old. Thus the temple which was standing in the time of Christ is sometimes spoken of as the *second* temple, though with more propriety it may be called the third; and the prophecy of Haggai, that the glory of the *latter* house should exceed that of the former, in that it

should receive "the desire of all nations," was fulfilled. (Hag. 2: 7—9.)

The main body of the new temple was completed in nine years and a half; but the whole structure, including the courts and cloisters, was not finished till long after the death of Herod, nor until years after the death of Christ. Hence the Jews said to our Saviour (improving a little upon our English translation,) "forty and six years *has this temple been in building*, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?" (John 2: 20.) Just forty-six years before this declaration was made, Herod entered upon the work of the temple. The work was continued, and artificers were employed in it during the whole period that our Saviour was on earth.\* It was finally completed under the administration of Gessius Florus, only a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

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\* There is an allusion to this fact in the gospels. "His disciples came to him *to show him the buildings of the temple.*" Matt. 24: 1. "Master, *see what manner of stones, and what buildings are here.*" Mark 13: 1. These expressions imply, that the work of the temple was now in progress.



The year after he had commenced building the temple, Herod made a journey to Rome, where he was received with much favor by Augustus. On his return, he took his two sons with him, who had before been sent to Rome to be educated. The one of them he married to a daughter of Archelaus, king of Cappadocia, and the other to a daughter of his sister Salome.

The following year, Agrippa, the son-in-law of Augustus, and governor under him of all the East, made a visit to Jerusalem. He was received with the greatest honor, not only by Herod, but by all the people, and nothing was omitted which could contribute to his gratification. Nor was Agrippa insensible of the honors conferred upon him. He brought a hecatomb of offerings to the temple, and made a feast to all the people. Soon after this, and at the intercession of Herod, Agrippa, confirmed to the Jews in Ionia, Asia Minor, and in other places, their religious freedom, exempted them from military service, and conferred upon them other important privileges.

I have just stated that Herod, on his return from Rome, took his two sons with him. These had not been long at Jerusalem, before the other members of his family began to envy them, and to excite the suspicions of their father against them. The young princes were not always as prudent as they should have been, and every incautious word they dropped, or deed they performed, was seized upon and magnified, to fan the flame of Herod's jealousy, and involve them in new troubles. This difficulty continued, with some intervals of quiet, but on the whole waxing worse and worse, till, in the third year before the birth of our Saviour, these innocent young men were condemned and executed. And then—when the deed was done, and could not be recalled—the eyes of the wretched father were opened. He had full proof furnished him, not only of the innocence of his murdered children, but that those members of his family (his brother Pheroras, and his eldest son Antipater) who had been their chief accusers, were really guilty of a conspiracy

against his life. They had resolved to take him off by poison, and would have accomplished their purpose, but that Pheroras was taken sick and died. The whole plot was discovered soon after his death, and Antipater was publicly executed.

But the end of Herod's bloody career was now come. He was seized with his last sickness. He had a violent internal fever, his intestines were ulcerated, his feet were swollen, his breath was fetid, and like Antiochus Epiphanes, he was literally eaten of worms. He now gave up all hope of recovery, and made preparations for leaving the world. He appointed his son Archelaus to be his successor in the kingdom of Judea; made Herod Antipas, another son, tetrarch of Galilee; and Philip, a younger son, tetrarch of Gaulonitis, Trachonitis, and other provinces in the northeast part of Palestine. He gave rich presents to the emperor Augustus, to his wife Julia, and to other relatives and friends, and died—in the utmost distress both of body and mind—in the seventieth year of his age, and the thirty-seventh of his reign.

Well knowing how much the Jews hated him, he called together some of the principal men of the nation just before his death, confined them in the hippodrome, and gave strict orders to his attendants to massacre them, as soon as he had breathed his last; that so there might be a mourning when he was gone. But this cruel order was not executed. His corpse was carried with great pomp to Herodium, near Jericho, and there laid in a sepulchre which he had himself prepared.

The character of Herod may be given in few words. He was ambitious of power, and altogether unscrupulous as to the means of securing it. He was suspicious, jealous, fond of magnificence and display, blood-thirsty, and cruel to the last degree. The murders which he committed in his own family—to say nothing of the thousands whom he sacrificed out of it—are full proof of this. So harshly did he treat his own children, that it passed into a proverb, “Better be Herod’s hog, than his son.” And yet he may be said, in the common acceptation of the terms, to have been a

lucky man. In repeated instances, he seemed on the very brink of ruin, and escaped, and rose to power, when he had the least reason to expect it. Nor was he without some redeeming qualities. He knew how to show kindness to his people, when he could do it safely, and to his own advantage. And he managed to hold the Jewish State together, and to maintain its honor and its power, until Shiloh came, and the promises of the Messiah were fulfilled.

But this brings me to an event, which took place a little previous to the death of Herod, and which was of more importance to the world than any which had before transpired: *The birth of our Lord Jesus Christ*. The precise year of his birth is not certainly known. According to the vulgar reckoning, which was fixed by Dionysius Exiguus (in connection with one of the Popes) in the sixth century, Christ was born in the year of the world 4004; but we have good reason to believe that his birth was several years earlier than this. We certainly know that it took place before the



death of Herod ; and Herod died, probably in the year of the world 4001. This would fix our Saviour's birth in the year 4000.

We arrive at the same conclusion from another datum furnished in the gospels. It appears from Luke 3: 1, that Jesus was "about thirty years of age," in "the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cesar;" or in the 4030th year of the world. Deducting thirty years from this, makes the date of Christ's birth the 4000th year of the world, as before. And this agrees with an old tradition of the Jews, that the world was to stand six thousand years; two thousand of which were to be before the law, two thousand under the law, and two thousand under the Messiah.

It is commonly said that, at the birth of Christ, the temple of Janus was shut, it being a time of universal peace. But this rests entirely on the authority of Orosius, who wrote in the fifth century. There is no allusion to such a circumstance in any more ancient writer. That it was a time of *general* peace in the Roman empire, is certain; but that

there were no wars ; that peace prevailed universally, is more than we are able to affirm.

Of the events immediately connected with the birth of our Saviour, we have no mention in secular history ; nor could this have been reasonably expected. The wise men who came to the court of Herod from the East were, probably, Magians from Babylonia or Persia. The murder of the children at Bethlehem accords well with the suspicious, cruel temper of Herod, and must have been among the last acts of his life.

According to Josephus, Herod had nine wives, and many children. Three of his sons, as before related, he put to death. Archelaus succeeded him on the throne of Judea. It was through fear of him, that Joseph and Mary, on their return from Egypt, declined settling in Judea, but “ turned aside into the parts of Galilee.” Archelaus reigned ten years, when, for his great wickedness, he was deposed by Augustus, and banished into Gaul.

Herod Antipas was tetrarch of Galilee. He divorced the wife of his youth, and mar-

ried Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Being reproved for this by John the Baptist, he seized his reprover, shut him up in prison, and then (to gratify his adulterous wife and wicked daughter) put him to death. (Mat. 14: 1—12.) This is the Herod who was at Jerusalem, and who made friends with Pilate, at the time of our Saviour's crucifixion. He, with his wife Herodias, were afterwards banished to Lyons in Gaul.

Of Philip, the tetrarch of Ituræa, Trachonitis and Gaulonitis, little is known, except that his brother took away his wife, and that he died early.

Of the grandchildren of Herod, the most distinguished was Herod Agrippa, who "killed James the brother of John with the sword," and intended "to take Peter also," but was miraculously prevented. (Acts 12: 1, 2.) After passing through many changes in the early part of his life, Caligula made him king of what had been the tetrarchy of his uncle Philip. Upon the death of Caligula, Claudius gave him the entire kingdom of his grand-

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father Herod. He reigned over Judea about three years, and died in the wretched manner described in the Acts of the Apostles. "The angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." (Acts 12 : 23.) The Herodias, who instigated the murder of John the Baptist, was his sister.

This first king Agrippa left a son Agrippa, who became a king, and reigned over several provinces in the northern part of Palestine. Drusilla, the wife of Felix, was his sister. (Acts 24 : 24.) He had another sister Bernice, whom he kept constantly with him, and with whom he is said to have lived in habitual incest. This is that king Agrippa before whom Paul pleaded his cause at Cesarea, as recorded in Acts 26. No wonder that he was not persuaded to be a Christian.

## CONCLUSION.

I have thus fulfilled the promise which I made to my readers, at the commencement of this work. I have connected summarily, the chain of history between the Old and the New Testaments. I have traced the story of God's dealings with his ancient covenant people,—of their revivings and backslidings, of their depressions, persecutions, distresses, and deliverances, from the time of the captivity in Babylon to the death of the first Herod, and the appearance of the Son of God in the flesh.

We first found the people of God in bondage to the proud monarch of Babylon. They then came under the power of a long succession of Medo-Persian kings, beginning with Darius the Mede, and ending with Darius Codomanus. Next, for a short time, they were governed by Alexander the Great; next by the Ptolemies; and next by the kings of Syria.



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Breaking away from their cruel oppressions, we next find this remarkable people sitting under the rule of princes of their own race, and enjoying a measure of political independence. But to retain this, they were under the necessity of allying themselves with Rome, and the Roman power swallowed them up, as it did all the world besides. Herod and his immediate descendants were Jews in religion, but Idumeans by birth, whose principal object was to please the Romans, and whose whole influence went to break down the spirit and corrupt the religion of the Jewish people.

The history over which we have passed is fitted to teach, and to impress upon us, some important lessons.

1. The natural tendency of things in this apostate world is *downwards*; downwards, I mean, in a moral point of view. This lesson is solemnly impressed upon us by *all* history. In the days before the flood, men continued to wax worse and worse, and the earth to become more filled with violence, until naught remained but that God must destroy it for its

wickedness. And after the flood, the true religion was quickly lost. "Men did not like to retain God in their knowledge;" and so he "gave them up to vile affections," and abominable practices, reserving only one family to himself. And the members of this family, notwithstanding their many privileges and restraints,—how frequently and dreadfully they relapsed. Through the whole period of their history, they had their seasons of correction and revival; but soon they would fall back again into the grossest wickedness.

So it was, very specially in that period of their history over which we have passed. Most dreadfully had this people backslidden and become corrupted, and most terribly were they chastised, in the destruction of their city and temple, and in their consequent captivity, under Nebuchadnezzar. After a long period of exile and suffering, the day of their deliverance at length arrived. Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Ezra, Nehemiah, and other holy men were raised up, under whom they were revived, and their lost privileges were in good measure re-

stored. But the influence of this revival was of short duration. When the honored instruments by whom it had been effected were removed, and consequent restraints were taken away, the nation fell back into courses of dreadful wickedness; and they needed other and heavier chastisements for their recovery. And when these had been inflicted, under the bloody hand of Antiochus Epiphanes, until the nation was humbled, and in some good measure prepared for deliverance; then again the hour of deliverance came. Matthias and his valiant sons were raised up to meet the crisis, and restore to Israel the privileges they had lost.

But the influence of this revival, like those which had preceded it, was of short duration. The seeds of corruption were in the hearts even of God's people; they quickly germinated; and bitter fruits began to appear. The descendants of good Matthias, after the second generation, became grossly wicked, and the people were oppressed and corrupted by them.

And so it has been in every age ; so it *will be* while human nature remains the same. This human nature is a fallen nature. It is a corrupted nature. All history as well as Scripture proclaims the fact ; and under its influence, the moral tendency of things in this world is forever downwards, from good to bad, and from bad to worse.

2. Another lesson which the history over which we have passed is fitted to teach, is that of God's *love and faithfulness to his church*. God has had a church on the earth from the beginning to the present time ; but its existence is owing, not to any inherent virtue in man, but entirely to his own love and faithfulness. Were it not for these, how often, and how hopelessly, must the church have been swallowed up ! Why was it not drowned in the deluge ? Why was it not crushed and consumed in Egypt ? Why did it survive the captivity at Babylon ? Why was it not utterly destroyed, (as the tyrant often threatened,) under the bloody hand of Antiochus Epiphanes ? How was the holy fire kept alive,

through those long centuries of darkness, when there was no voice of prophecy, no open vision, and nothing to cheer the desponding people of God, but the promise of a Shiloh to come? The answer to all these questions is the same. God loves his church. He remembers it even in the darkest times. He kindly and constantly watches over it. He is inviolably faithful to preserve it. The chastisements which he inflicts upon his backsliding people are no evidence of unfaithfulness, but the contrary. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." It is in mercy that he applies the rod. This is one of the means which he employs, and a needful one, of preservation and ultimate victory.

3. That portion of history over which we have passed should *strengthen our faith* in the truth of God's Word, and in the perfection of his government. The *preservation* of the church, notwithstanding all the dangers to which it has been exposed,—the preservation of the Jews as a distinct people, in fulfillment of the promises made to their fathers,—this



fact is alone sufficient to establish our faith. Then there is the *fulfillment of prophecy*, numerous instances of which we have been led to notice. Some of these instances are so remarkable as to lead the infidel madly to affirm that they must be *historical*, and not prophetic; that they must have been written *after* the alleged time of their fulfillment. Now every such prediction is a revelation from God. It can be accounted for in no other way. Hence, the book containing these predictions, and of which they constitute an integral part, must be *God's book*,—the word, the will, the revelation of God.

But the history over which we have passed is calculated to establish our faith in God, in another sense. I mean in the *wisdom and perfection of his government*. We see the wisdom of this government shining out even in the darkest times; leading the church along in the right way, though often a mysterious way; raising up deliverers for it when most needed; crushing its proud and persecuting enemies; and that, too, so signally, in repeated instances,

as to lead all men to exclaim : “ Verily, there is a God who judgeth in the earth !” “ The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth !”

4. We further see, in the history which has been before us, that Christ made his appearance in our world at *the right time*. He is said to have come “ in the *fullness* of time ;” which may mean, perhaps, the *right* time, the *best* time. Events had not so fully shown the vanity of all other dependences, and the perishing need in which the world stood of a Deliverer from heaven, until about the time when he actually appeared in the flesh. God had been using experiments, so to speak, from the beginning, to impress this great idea upon the hearts of men ; but these experiments had not been completed, and their results made up, till about the time of which we speak. There was the experiment of long life—a long probation, in the first age of the world ; and the experiment of sore and awful judgments, as of the deluge, and the destruction of Sodom, and of Pharaoh ; and the experiment of heathen

philosophy and idolatry ; and the experiment of civil government, under various forms ; and the experiment of separating a single family and nation, and bestowing upon it peculiar privileges ;—all these experiments for the recovery of lost men had been tried, and failed, except the last, and this seemed likely soon to fail ; when,—in our greatest extremity, and as the last effort which could be made for us,—God sent into the world his only Son. He “came to seek and to save the lost.” His name was called *Jesus*, because he should “save his people from their sins.” In this view, we have reason to be thankful that Christ came *when* he did ;—no sooner, no later ; when the way had been fully prepared for him ; when the world had come to feel, in some measure, its *need* of him. He came, as the Scriptures represent, in the *fullness* of time—the *best time*.

Finally, the study of that portion of history over which we have passed will be of use, in preparing us the better *to read and understand the Bible*, both the Old Testament and the

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New. Most of the Old Testament history is too ancient to connect, cotemporaneously, with any secular history of the world. We cannot compare it, except in a few incidental particulars, if we would. But when we come down to the time of the captivity—the age of Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel, and Ezra, and Nehemiah, the comparison, to some extent, may be made. The secular historian there meets us ; and who does not see, that it must throw light on the brief records of the sacred history, and impart to it a fresh interest, to find its statements confirmed and illustrated in the histories of the times.

And then, when we have waded through the long, dark, intervening period, with no hand to guide us but that of the secular historian, and begin to emerge into the light of the New Testament ; how interesting to find that the same characters which we read of in the Gospels, and in the Acts, are portrayed also, and some of them with much greater fullness, in the secular histories over which we have passed. We read in the New Testament

of Herod, and Archelaus, and Antipas, and Philip, and Herodias, and the two Agrippas, and Pilate, and Felix, and Festus, and many others. But when we look into Josephus, and Tacitus, and the other histories of the times, we find the same names and characters more fully drawn out, all agreeing as to time, and place, and other circumstances, with the statements of the Bible. We thus gain a better understanding of the Bible. We read it with new interest and pleasure. Our faith in its truth and accuracy is confirmed, and we are the better prepared to yield ourselves up to its holy teachings, guidance, and influence.

May we all thus study and love the sacred Word. May we receive its truths, and obey its precepts. May we give diligent heed to it, in all life's pilgrimage, as to a light shining in a dark place.

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THE END.
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